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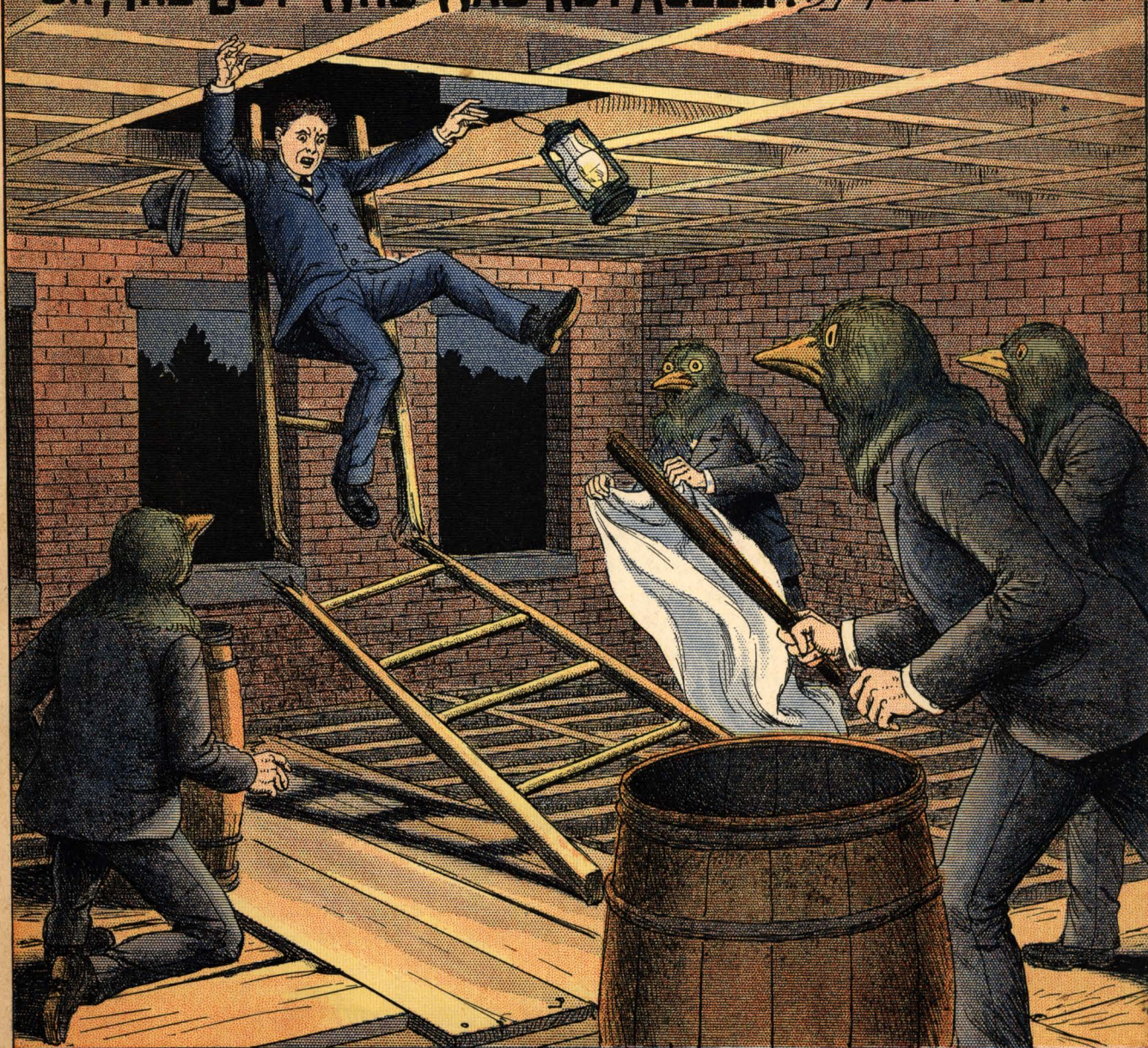
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FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF

BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

AN EYE TO BUSINESS; OR, THE BOY WHO WAS NOT ASLEEP. *By A SELF MADE MAN.*



Then something the boy had not calculated on happened. The ladder snapped in two beneath his weight. As Travers came tumbling to the floor he caught sight of several grotesque figures rising from behind the shelter of the empty barrels.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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An Eye to Business

OR,

THE BOY WHO WAS NOT ASLEEP

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

SHOWS HOW TOM TRAVERS STUCK UP FOR PATTY PENROSE.

"What's the matter, Patty?" You've been crying, I can easily see. Same old story, I s'pose? Nathan Kemp or his sister has been abusing you, as usual."

Thus spoke stalwart Tom Travers, sixteen years old, to Patty Penrose, a pretty, rosy-cheeked miss, who came to a pause before the doorway of the blacksmith's shop on the suburbs of Barmouth, where he stood with his coat off and his sleeves rolled up beyond the elbow.

Tom was a fine type of young, vigorous American boyhood, and we might easily fancy that his strong, resolute face, now eloquent with sympathy, was not one upon which a girl of Patty's years could look with indifference.

On this particular afternoon, now merging into dusk, he had been helping Jack Harding, the young blacksmith, put a new tire on a wagon wheel, and had kept the forge fire aglow while Harding fashioned sundry pieces of iron into shapes for repairing various agricultural implements that lay about the shop.

Tom was accustomed to frequenting the blacksmith's, when he wasn't out fishing, or sailing pleasure-seekers down the bay in his staunch, clinker-built boat, Seadrift—not because he had any idea of learning the trade, but because Jack Harding was one of his best friends as well as his prospective brother-in-law.

Tom infinitely preferred the water to any occupation

on shore, but that was because he had inherited the same love for the sea which his father had in his own youth.

Ten years previous to the beginning of this story Captain Ezra Travers sailed from Boston for Rio de Janeiro, but his brig was never heard from afterward.

A quarter boat with the vessel's name, Susan Dean, together with some pieces of drifting wreck, were picked up off the coast of South America by an American ship bound north, and it was presumed that the brig had gone down with all hands in a heavy gale.

When Mrs. Travers finally gave up all hope of ever seeing her husband again, she removed from Boston to her native town, Barmouth, and with her husband's savings purchased a little, old-fashioned cottage on the brow of a gentle slope overlooking the harbor.

Here she devoted herself to her two children, Tom and Dora, who thought no mother in all the world half so sweet.

Dora, who was eighteen, learned dressmaking and millinery, and was now able to keep the pot boiling, for she had all the work she could attend to.

Tom, although ambitious and energetic, was not settled at any definite occupation, chiefly because his mother and sister had insisted that he finish his schooling at the Barmouth Academy.

However, he managed to make many a dollar with his boat during the summertime, for, though he liked to enjoy himself in boyish sports as well as any of his associates, he still had an eye to business when there was anything to be made.

Tom was a general favorite with the girls of the town, but he thought more of Patty Penrose, a sweet little orphan who had been brought up by one Nathan Kemp and his maiden sister, than all the others put together.

Patty led a bitter hard life of it in the Kemp household, and her unenviable lot strongly appealed to Tom's chivalric nature.

More than once he had interfered in her behalf when Nathan Kemp had abused the girl on the street, and had thus incurred the rooted dislike of that sour-visaged individual.

Mr. Kemp had cautioned Patty not to have anything more to do with Tom Travers on the pain of a sound beating to be administered by his sister; but in spite of his threat, emphasized by certain remarks from Miss Priscilla Kemp, she felt loath to give up a friendship that was the dearest thing in all the world to her.

On the afternoon of the day our story opens, Patty, after washing all the morning, set to work to iron the clothes she took off the line in the yard.

She had almost finished the work, when she accidentally burned the corner of one of Miss Priscilla's handkerchiefs.

The maiden lady, being in a particularly bad humor that day, attacked the girl in a savage way and drove her from the house.

Patty fled down the road, and before she realized how far she had gone was in the neighborhood of Harding's smithy.

She saw Tom Travers standing in the doorway, and instinctively she ran to him for protection.

He greeted her with the words that open this chapter.

Patty looked at him with swimming eyes and then buried her face in her apron.

"Don't cry, Patty," said Tom, soothingly. "It just makes me mad to think of the way the Kemps treat you. They ought to be ashamed of themselves, but it doesn't seem to be in them. I wish you'd pack up your things and leave them. Mother and Sis would be glad to take you until you got a decent place."

"I can't leave them, indeed I can't," sobbed the girl. "Miss Priscilla would kill me if she thought I had any such idea."

"Ho!" exclaimed Tom, in a resolute tone. "If you left them I'd like to see Mr. Kemp or his sister dare to interfere with you. You're foolish to put up with their abuse. They haven't any hold on you."

"They took me from the poor farm, and Mr. Kemp says if I dare to leave them he'll have me put in the lock-up."

"He said that, did he? He couldn't do any such thing."

"He says he raised me from a little girl, boarded and clothed me, and sent me to school, and that the law gives him power over me till I'm eighteen, at any rate."

"It's fat board and a healthy lot of clothes he's given you, according to your own account. You've earned the little you've received ten times over, for you're little better than a slave. As to education, I'll bet he'd have cut that out if he had dared. The law says you have to go to school

so long, and consequently he didn't dare prevent you going. It would give me a heap of satisfaction to hand Nathan Kemp a first-class dressing-down, and I'd do it, only I don't care to be arrested and put in the lock-up for assault and battery."

At that moment Tom, happening to glance up the road, saw Nathan Kemp approaching at a rapid gait.

The boy didn't know whether the man had seen Patty talking to him, as he was standing between the girl and her tyrant, but he decided to hide her inside the smithy from his prying eyes in case he came up to the place.

"Come inside, Patty," he said, taking her by the arm.

"No, no; I must go back."

"I wouldn't advise you to go back yet, for Mr. Kemp is coming down the road as fast as he can, and he would probably make your return journey mighty unpleasant."

"Hide me," she cried in a tone of terror, springing into the shop. "Don't let him see me."

"I won't if I can help it," he replied reassuringly. "It's getting dark, and that's in your favor. Here, hide in that dark corner behind the forge. You'll be safe there if you don't move."

Jack Harding, a big, strapping, handsome fellow, with muscles fitted to his calling, a hard worker, thrifty and kind-hearted, was beating out a bit of glowing iron on the anvil.

He laughed as he saw Patty fly behind the forge, and easily guessed the cause that prompted the action.

Both he and Tom had often talked about the pretty young orphan, and wondered why she didn't give Nathan Kemp and his virago of a sister the shake.

As Patty disappeared, and Tom, to further shield her, took hold of the loose handle of the bellows and began to work it up and down, the Barmouth fire-bell began to ring, not an alarm, but a merry peal, and the sound was immediately taken up by the church bells, and soon the early evening air quivered with their brazen throats.

This was the Barmouth custom of ushering in the Fourth of July, and it was soon followed by sundry sharp reports, mellowed by distance, showing that Young America was waking up to the responsibilities of the occasion.

It was at this moment that a small man, with a smoothly shaven face and unprepossessing cast of countenance, appeared at the doorway.

He wore a tight-fitting suit of some dark material, rather rusty-looking, and his tall hat was of the fashion of ten years before.

He might have been taken for a lawyer who was not prosperous, or a storekeeper on the ragged edge of adversity, or a life insurance and real estate agent troubled with chronic dyspepsia; but Nathan Kemp wasn't any of these.

Mr. Kemp was secretary of a Boston association which maintained a fund for providing the heathen with articles tending to their spiritual and bodily welfare.

He went to the metropolis three or four times a week with unfailing regularity, and though he looked poor he

was not, for everybody in Barmouth knew that he had a fat balance in the town bank.

He stood for a moment in the doorway glaring at Jack Harding and Tom Travers, both of whom he cordially detested.

The young blacksmith dropped his arms to his sides and returned the compliment by staring with right good will at him.

"Good evening, Mr. Kemp," said Jack, cheerily. "I suppose that you are prepared to enjoy our national holiday with the rest of us?"

"I enjoy a holiday?" retorted Nathan Kemp, sourly. "No! I have no time for such foolery."

"You might do worse," Harding observed. "I wish I could have the whole day to myself, but I have such a stack of work on hand that I'll be busy most of the morning, at any rate."

"It will keep you out of mischief and put money in your pocket," replied the visitor, crustily. "Listen to the bells! The bedlamites who pull the ropes ought to be flogged for making such an unearthly racket. Bah! I have no patience with such nonsense."

"For my own part, I love the sound of the bells," replied Jack. "They have honest tongues and never lie. To-night they are telling us of a nation freed from the yoke of tyranny over a hundred years ago—a nation which to-day is the greatest and most prosperous on the face of the globe."

"Bah!" snarled Nathan Kemp. "I hate such sentiments."

"It seems to me you hate everything that is kind and good, Mr. Kemp," returned the young blacksmith, curtly. "What do you want here?"

"I'm looking for that lazy, good-for-nothing girl of ours—Patty Penrose. I thought maybe she ran in here. It's like her to do such a thing. Perhaps she is hiding here, for all I know."

Nathan Kemp strode forward as if to cross the forge, but Harding blocked the way.

"What should bring her here at this time of the evening?" asked the blacksmith, with a searching look at the unwelcome intruder.

"She ran out of the house half an hour ago and left her work half done, because my sister chided her for ruining a pocket handkerchief. She's an idle, careless——"

"Stop, Mr. Kemp; you can't abuse Patty Penrose in my presence," exclaimed Tom Travers, coming forward.

"Oh, I can't, eh?" sneered the visitor.

"No! I won't stand for it," said the boy threateningly.

"I'd like to know what business it is of yours?"

"It's the business of every decent man or boy to protect the good name of an honest girl when the occasion arises," replied Tom, stoutly. "You treat that girl as you would treat a dog, if you had one—you and your sister. You both ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Mark my words: the blows and harsh words you hand out to her will some day recoil on both your heads."

"How dare you talk to me in that fashion!" sputtered Nathan Kemp, in sudden anger.

"I'm not afraid to tell you to your face what I think of you, you old cormorant!" cried Tom, angrily.

"Easy, Tom, easy," interposed Harding, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"You're an impertinent young puppy!" roared Mr. Kemp, glaring at Tom Travers. "If I had my way with you, you should be flogged till you begged for mercy. It is a thousand pities there isn't a law that would punish you that way."

"Thank you for your kind wishes, Mr. Kemp, but things are not coming your way at present. You don't like plain speaking, but it has done me good to tell you what's in my mind. If I had anything to say, Patty Penrose wouldn't darken your doors again. If she had no other place to go, she could have the shelter of our home. I should like to see you try to take her away from there. I'd run you out so quick it would make your head swim."

"I'll pay you for this conduct, you young cub!" snorted Nathan Kemp, in a rage. "I'll remember everything you've said. I give you warning not to harbor that girl, d'ye understand? If you do I'll have the law on you. As for her, the jade! my sister will attend to her when she gets back to the house. She'll get something she'll remember for a month," cried the visitor, vindictively. "Priscilla will make her dance a lively step, I warrant you. She'll have cause to remember this afternoon for the rest of her life."

"If you dare to beat her," shouted Tom, making a furious rush at Nathan Kemp, "I'll break every bone in your body."

Jack Harding grabbed the angry boy and held him, while the visitor, frightened by Tom's words and manner, beat a hasty retreat from the blacksmith shop.

CHAPTER II.

NATHAN KEMP CALLS AT THE TRAVERS COTTAGE.

"Cool down, Tom," said Jack Harding, with a smile; "don't let your anger get the better of you. If you had struck Nathan Kemp he'd have you in jail to-morrow, and you'd lose your holiday, not speaking of the disgrace it would be to your mother and sister as well."

"That's right, Jack," replied Tom, cooling off. "Thanks for holding me in. I was mad enough to have smashed him in the jaw. I can't stand it to hear him make threats against Patty. She's the best little girl in the world——"

"Except your sister, Dora, of course," laughed Jack, who was engaged to Miss Travers.

"She and Dora stand on the same level with me," said Tom, with a flushed face. "Now, look here, Jack, we must persuade Patty not to go back to the Kemps, but come over to my house and stay. If she goes back, and they beat her, I swear I'll thrash that old villain within an inch of his

life, if I do go to jail for it," said the boy in a tone that showed he meant every word he spoke.

"No, Tom, you mustn't get into trouble on my account," said a sweet voice at his shoulder, and turning he saw Patty standing there with a look of gratitude shining in her eyes.

"Patty," said Tom, "you heard what Mr. Kemp said?"

"Every word," with a little shudder.

"You know what you've got to expect if you go back. You mustn't go back."

Patty shook her head sadly.

"How can I avoid it?" she asked plaintively. "No matter where I might go, he would come after me and compel me—"

"I'd like to see him compel you," burst out the boy.

"No, no, Tom, you mustn't interfere—indeed you mustn't," begged the girl. "It would make me dreadfully unhappy if you got into any trouble on my account."

"I can't help it. Those Kemps have sat on you long enough."

"I'll tell you what you might do," said Jack. "I don't believe that Nathan Kemp has any legal claim on Patty. She could go and stay at your house until the day after the Fourth. Then you could go to the magistrate and have Mr. Kemp cited to appear before him to show cause why he shouldn't be put under bonds to treat the girl decently, or give up all claim to her services. If Patty would tell her story I think the Kemps would look pretty small before the public."

"That's a good idea," said Tom, eagerly. "Will you do that, Patty?"

"I don't know," she answered doubtfully. "I'm afraid——"

"You don't want to be afraid of anything. You've got Jack and me at your back, and Mr. Kemp won't dare make any trouble for you. If he tried to, well, say, we wouldn't do a thing to him."

Finally Patty, who was clearly afraid to return to the Kemp home, was persuaded to agree to the proposal suggested by the young blacksmith, and shortly afterward she accompanied Tom to his mother's cottage, where she was kindly received by Mrs. Travers and Dora, who had long felt a great sympathy for the friendless girl.

That night after supper it was agreed that Patty should make her home with them if an arrangement could be forced upon Nathan Kemp and his sister.

Tom was tickled to death to think that Patty Penrose was probably going to make her home at the cottage.

In that event he would be able to see and talk to her every day, and take her out sailing with him in the Seadrift, and for walks during the long summer evenings.

While picturing the fine times they were going to have together he fell asleep and dreamed that he and Patty were sailing around the world together in the boat, with nothing in sight but the light blue sky and deep blue sea.

A series of deafening explosions aroused him suddenly, to find that it was morning and that the Fourth of July had come.

Tom popped out of bed and looked out of the window.

There were several of his Academy schoolmates outside in the backyard amusing themselves by tossing giant fire-crackers just under his window.

"Hello, fellows!" cried Tom. "What time is it?"

"Five o'clock. Get up and come down."

So Tom dressed himself in a hurry, made a hasty toilet, and joined his friends.

He had a box full of giant crackers himself stowed away in the woodshed.

Getting them, he started off with his companions for the public square called the green.

For the next two hours the Barmouth green was a scene of smoke, noise and general excitement.

By that time nearly all the boys had exhausted their supply of explosives, and the fun had come to a pause until they had had their breakfasts and touched their parents for extra money to buy a fresh outfit.

Tom started for the cottage in company with a boy named Downey Davis, who lived near him.

"I see the Night Hawks have turned up again," said Downey, as they walked along.

"Who told you?" asked Tom.

"Constable Spriggins was talking to my father about them last evening. He said they broke into the Stansbury post-office the other night and carried off all the stamps there was in the place, as well as looting the store. They came and went—four of them—in a red auto. On the next night Deacon White's house was entered and robbed of a lot of silverware and jewelry. It must have been the same gang, for four men, disguised with green birds' heads, were seen crossing the bridge in a red motor car."

"I thought they'd gone away for good from the neighborhood after the reward was offered for their capture three months ago."

"That's what everybody thought, I guess. They suddenly disappeared, and that was the last heard of them until the Stansbury post-office was robbed."

"I suppose they're a gang of Boston crooks."

"They may be from New York, for all we know."

"That's right, too," nodded Tom.

"I wonder why they wear green birds' heads?"

"As a disguise, of course."

"I should think masks would answer ever so much better."

"That's their business."

"What do you s'pose those heads are made of?"

"Papier-mache, I guess. That's what they make those funny heads of they use in spectacular pieces on the stage."

"Is that so?" said Downey Davis. "What is papier-mache, anyway?"

"It's a hard substance made of a pulp from rags or paper mixed with glue or size. In its soft state you can form it into any kind of shape you want to by means of molds. After it gets hard it retains its shape like plaster of paris."

The two boys separated at the gate of the Travers cottage, and Tom went around to the kitchen entrance.

Patty, looking uncommonly fresh and pretty, was making herself generally useful in the kitchen.

"Hello, Patty," exclaimed Tom. "You look sweet enough to kiss this morning."

Patty blushed like a full-blown rose and escaped into the dining-room, where Tom found his mother and sister, and breakfast almost ready.

"Say, Patty," asked Tom, during the meal, "have you ever had trouble with the milk at the Kemps?"

"Sometimes, when the weather had been extra hot, or after a thunder-storm."

"Why did you ask such a foolish question as that, Tom?" asked his sister.

"Well, I thought probably every time Miss Priscilla Kemp looked at it it turned sour."

Patty laughed outright, while Mrs. Travers and Dora smiled.

They had just finished when there came a vigorous ring at the door-bell.

"I wonder who that can be?" asked Dora.

Patty looked apprehensive.

"Maybe it's the old villain himself," said Tom.

"The old who?" exclaimed his sister.

"Nathan Kemp."

Dora answered the ring, and sure enough there on the doorstep stood Mr. Kemp, his face looking like three days of rainy weather.

"Is Patty Penrose here?" he asked sourly.

"She is," answered Dora.

"Then send her to me, please."

"Will you walk into the parlor?"

"I have no time to spare," he replied sulkily.

"I will tell Patty you have called for her. Please walk in while I go for her."

Rather against his will, Nathan Kemp complied, and was shown into the little parlor, which was ornamented with family portraits, marine paintings, and curiosities of all kinds from the South Seas that Captain Ezra Travers had gathered during his many years of seafaring life.

After some delay Mrs. Travers entered the room with Patty, Tom hovering on the outside.

Nathan Kemp jumped to his feet and glared at the trembling girl.

"How dare you stay away from home all night?" he demanded in a suppressed tone. "Miss Priscilla is very angry with you and sent me to bring you back. Come, we will go."

Patty shrank away from him.

"I don't want to go back."

"I don't care what you want," he said threateningly. "You will have to answer for your conduct when you get back."

"You are only frightening the girl," interposed Mrs. Travers.

"Madam," replied Nathan Kemp, "the girl belongs to us."

"You speak as if you thought you owned her," replied Tom's mother, gently.

"We own her services until she is eighteen—that's the law," replied the visitor, in a tone calculated to impress his hearers.

"Patty says that she is not happy at your house, Mr. Kemp."

"It makes little difference to us what she says, madam. If you knew her as well as we do you would take little notice of her words. But I have no time to spare. Come with me, girl."

Patty turned and rushed out of the room.

She had resolved to go to prison rather than go back to the Kemps.

CHAPTER III.

HERMIT ISLAND.

"Madam," said Nathan Kemp, "I'll have to trouble you to bring that girl back."

"I am afraid she has determined not to return to your house," replied Mrs. Travers.

"If she doesn't return voluntarily I shall get a constable to fetch her," said Mr. Kemp, angrily.

"If you do that she will certainly appeal to a magistrate."

"A magistrate, madam!" exclaimed Nathan Kemp, aghast.

"Yes. She says that both you and your sister have treated her harshly, and she showed me last night marks on her back which she says your sister inflicted with a heavy strap. If she takes her case before a justice, Mr. Kemp, you will have to appear in court to try and refute her statement. If the magistrate believes her story you will not be able to force her to return to your house. Now, I think the easiest way is the best for all parties. Let Patty——"

"Madam," interrupted Nathan Kemp, boiling over with wrath, "I don't wish any advice on the subject. I will send a constable here to fetch her. If she dares talk magistrate to us, I'll fix her, the minx!"

He stalked to the door, followed by Mrs. Travers, and, having passed out, turned his steps toward the residence of Constable Spriggins, for he knew that official would not be at his office in the courthouse that day.

For fear that the constable would come after Patty, Tom decided to take her down the bay in his boat.

The girl agreed to go with him, so Dora put up a lunch for them, and they left the house about nine o'clock.

Tom had to go to Deer Island, some eight miles distant from Barmouth, anyway, late in the afternoon, to bring back a party he had taken there the morning previous to spend a day and a half camping out on that picturesque island.

"Isn't it a lovely day?" exclaimed Patty, as she stepped on board of the Seadrift.

"Bang up, especially on the water. There's just enough weight in the breeze to make the boat put her best foot forward," replied Tom.

"Are you going down to Deer Island?"

"Not right away. I've got to be there at four o'clock, so as to land the gentlemen in Barmouth in time to catch the 6.10 train for Boston."

Tom hoisted the sail and then cast off from the wharf.

He headed for a small wooded island about two miles off shore.

"That's where Old Robinson Crusoe lived for so many years," said Tom, pointing the island out to her.

"Who was Old Robinson Crusoe?" Patty asked in surprise.

"He was an old chap who took possession of an unfinished building that some hotel man started to put up on the island as a select inn for summer boarders, but somehow the scheme fell through and the house was never finished. The old fellow fitted up a portion of the lower story to suit himself, and dwelt there all alone for several years, and then disappeared as suddenly as he turned up. The boys nicknamed him Old Robinson Crusoe."

"Is the house there yet?" asked Patty, with great interest.

"Sure it is—exactly as he left it."

"I should like to see it."

"I'll take you ashore and show it to you. We can stay on the island until it is time for me to start down the bay after the party on Deer Island."

Fifteen minutes later Tom ran the Seadrift into an indentation, tied the painter to a convenient tree, and helped Patty to land.

"You can see the unfinished second story of the building from here," said Tom, pointing at the upper part of an oblong structure which rose above a thick row of trees in the center of the island.

They walked through the grove until they came upon a big clearing, in the center of which stood the unfinished two-story edifice which had been planned for a summer inn, but which had come to nought.

Tom and Jack Harding and numbers of the Academy boys had been over to look at the place after the hermit had vanished for parts unknown.

The recluse had made a table, a chair and other rude furniture for himself out of material taken from the uncompleted section of the building, and these specimens of his handiwork remained as evidence of his occupancy of the premises.

When Tom pushed in the rude door which had been fitted by the hermit he was surprised to see four roughly fashioned chairs instead of one, and a table twice the size of the one he had remembered seeing a month before.

There were other signs to show that the place was in actual use by several persons, or at least had been lately occupied by squatters.

Tom pointed out the changes which he noticed to Patty.

"There's the original chair—the one Old Robinson Crusoe made and used. The others are later creations. A new top has been added to that table, making it longer and wider. Those empty bottles, that jug, and a whole lot of

things I see around were not here when Jack and I came over last."

"Do you think there are people living here, then?" asked Patty.

"Looks as if there might be; but there is nobody around now, as far as I can see."

They walked all around the building, peeping in here and there at the ground floor, but nowhere save in the hermit's section did there appear to be any change to Tom.

He and Patty strolled all over the little island, without finding a sign of life on it.

"There's no one here now, at any rate," said Tom at last. "Whoever has been living here since the hermit pulled up stake must have left also."

They sat on the beach in the shade and talked about one thing or another until midday came, when, feeling hungry, they ate the lunch prepared by Dora.

Then Tom suggested taking to the boat again.

The breeze was lighter and the water smoother than before.

From Barmouth were wafted to their ears faint sounds of the day's celebration.

Over the bar, just beyond Deer Island, lay the deep blue waters of Massachusetts Bay, dotted with the white sails of many pleasure craft.

The Seadrift reached the small wharf on the sheltered side of Deer Island about quarter past three o'clock, and Tom suggested to one of the campers that it would be well to embark for Barmouth at once, as the run back, owing to the failing wind, was likely to be longer than he had counted on when he set the hour of departure at four.

The party agreed to leave the island right away.

About this time Tom noticed a peculiar haziness in the air which warned him of the approach of a sea mist.

He hurried the movements of the party, and inside of ten minutes the Seadrift had cast off from the wharf and had her nose pointed straight for Barmouth.

Patty had retired to the cabin, where she amused herself with a book Tom provided her with.

"Looks as if there was a mist rolling in yonder," remarked one of Tom's passengers, pointing to windward.

"There is," replied the young skipper of the Seadrift. "That's why I was in such a hurry to get under way."

The party was quite a jolly one of Boston clerks, and the prospect of getting caught in a fog didn't seem to worry them.

The town was straight ahead, and, fog or no fog, it didn't seem possible for them to miss it if the boat's course was kept as it was at present.

They didn't count on the influence of the tide, or the failure of the wind, after it had come on thick, to upset their calculations altogether.

Ten minutes later Deer Island, now half a mile astern, the sky, and almost the sea itself were blotted out by one of those sudden fogs peculiar to the New England coast.

The breeze had crept around to the north and east, and this it was that had brought the fog down so suddenly.

The boat sailed on through a bank of mist so thick it seemed as if you could cut it with a knife.

After covering what Tom judged to be several miles the wind dropped all of a sudden, leaving the Seadrift apparently motionless on the water.

The tide, however, was bearing them slowly along in a diagonal direction toward the small island once occupied by the hermit.

"We'll never reach Barmouth in time to catch the train at this rate," remarked one of the clerks, trying to pierce with his eyes the wall of white fog which hedged in the sailboat.

"Then we'll have to take a later one," replied another.

"What are the chances of our reaching shore in a reasonable time, young man?" the leader of the party asked Tom.

"Very little chance until the wind springs up again and the fog lifts," replied the young skipper of the Seadrift.

"That's encouraging," answered his passenger. "Well, I suppose it cannot be helped."

"You might all whistle for the wind, like the sailors do sometimes," laughed Tom.

The five clerks who made up the party immediately began to whistle a popular air with all their might.

An hour passed away and the dead calm still prevailed.

The boat drifted nearer and nearer to the hermit island.

Nobody, not even the young skipper, was aware of the fact.

At length the sun went down and dusk came on.

The watches of the party showed that the 6.10 train was well on its way to Boston by that time.

"Judging from present prospects we may have to stay all night on the bay," said a clerk, dolefully. "Then we'll catch it hot to-morrow for not being at the bank on time."

At that moment Tom caught sight of a light shining dimly through the mist.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOUR BIRDS.

The light in question looked to be about twenty feet or more above the surface of the water, and Tom thought it came from a lantern hanging at the masthead of some pleasure craft caught in the fog like themselves.

The others saw it presently and wanted to know where it came from.

Before Tom could make any reply the light moved away a short distance and then came to a stop again, just as if somebody had carried it.

Tom was somewhat puzzled at this phenomenon, for he was almost certain they were not that close to the main shore.

A large vessel, high enough out of the water to account for the light being on her deck, seldom put in at Barmouth—and only then when something was wrong with her.

The only land he could figure on as being in that neigh-

borhood was the hermit island, and if anybody was ashore there the light would be much lower down.

That is the way Tom reasoned it, until he suddenly thought of the unfinished building.

The light stood at about the height of the second story, just above the trees.

At that moment the light moved again, suddenly vanished, and then came into sight again, disappeared once more, appeared again and remained.

"By George!" Tom thought. "I'll bet we are close to that island, and somebody is in the second floor of that house. Looks as if the people who have been living there are back again. They were absent on shore evidently when Patty and I were there this morning. Now I know where we are at, and if there was a wind I could run right in for Barmouth without any trouble."

Even as he spoke a skyrocket burst in the air in the direction where the boy judged the town lay.

Others followed at intervals for a while and then ceased.

"We are about two miles from Barmouth," Tom told the leader of the party.

"If you know that, can't you tell where that light comes from?" asked the man.

"It's on a small wooded island that you may have remembered seeing when I took you out yesterday morning. I told you the story of the hermit who lived on it for two or three years in the abandoned unfinished hotel building."

"Oh, yes. We had an idea of looking in at it on our way back if we had time."

"We are likely to drift ashore there, from all indications," replied Tom. "If a breeze would only pipe up now I'd be able to land you somewhere along the Barmouth shore inside of half an hour."

No breeze came, however, and they steadily drew nearer to the light.

Tom now went forward with a boat hook to fend off from the shore, which he expected the boat would strike at any moment.

In a few minutes he made out the dark outlines of the island close aboard.

Then the boat floated right into the same cove he had put into during the morning.

Tom jumped ashore with the painter and tied it to the same tree.

"We might as well stay here until a wind comes up," he said. "We can't better ourselves. I'm going over to the house to see who's there."

Tom stepped aboard to get the lantern which hung in the cuddy.

He found Patty stretched out on one of the lockers asleep.

He lit the lantern, pulled the cuddy door partly shut after him, told his passengers he would be back in a short time, and then stepped ashore and started off in the direction of the unfinished building.

The fog lay thick among the trees and the light Tom carried made little impression on it.

He soon lost sight of the light on the upper floor of the

house, but, as he knew his way pretty well, he had no trouble in going direct to the clearing.

There the fog hovered in a palpitating mass, and through one of the upper window openings he again caught sight of the light.

He walked around to the end formerly occupied by the hermit and saw a lamp burning on the table.

A number of plates, with the remains of a meal on them, flanked by four cups and saucers drained of their contents, with four sets of knives and forks, and other articles in keeping with the general display, lay about on the board.

The butt of a half-smoked cigar projected from the edge of the table, and there was a dying fire in the hermit's old cook stove, on which stood a common coffee pot.

On the floor lay a frying pan in the midst of several broken egg shells.

"Four persons have eaten supper here not long ago," mused Tom, as he looked around the room. "I wonder where they are at this moment? Maybe on the second floor where I saw the light. What can they be doing up there? I don't hear a sound from them. If they were tramping around the building they would be sure to make a noise. I've no time to wait here for them to show up. I'll just take a squint upstairs and see if they are there, and what they look like. Probably four tramps who have stolen a boat and come over here to pass the summer. It's very like that kind of gentry to do such a thing."

So Tom left the hermit's living room and walked around to a doorway in the unfinished part of the building.

There was nothing to prevent him from walking inside.

The floor was littered with loose boards, and several large empty barrels stood around.

In one corner was a large opening communicating with the cellar, while in the center of the rough ceiling was an oblong opening that was clearly intended to be reached by a stairway.

No stairway had been built when the work was abandoned.

At the present moment a ladder reached up into it.

This ladder had not been there when Tom and Patty looked in that morning.

Tom, after swinging his lantern at arm's length and seeing nothing, began to mount the ladder to explore the floor above.

He paused with his head just above the flooring, undecided whether he would go any further or not, for the room was dark and silent as the grave.

Apparently the island squatters were not there.

The boy had an idea that this was the room whence the light had proceeded from.

There was no light there now, at all events.

He flashed his lantern around, but could see only the bare boards.

"There's nothing to see up here," said Tom to himself.

He started to descend.

Then something the boy had not calculated upon happened.

The ladder snapped in two beneath his weight.

As Travers came tumbling to the floor he caught sight of several grotesque figures rising from behind the shelter of the empty barrels.

Whack!

He struck the floor with a resounding concussion that shook the building.

The lantern flew from his hand and rolled a dozen feet away.

He lay there half stunned from the shock he had sustained.

Then as his senses came back to him he saw what appeared to be four gigantic birds' heads bending over him.

They had big, round, white eyes with black disks, and immense beaks projecting at least seven inches from their heads.

It was a most astonishing sight to Tom, who could not understand the matter at all.

The obscurity of the place added to the extravagant appearance of the birdlike heads and completed the boy's bewilderment.

Suddenly he felt himself seized and carried out into the open air by the four queer forms, from whom came not a sound.

He was borne across the clearing and into the woods, in spite of the struggle he put up to free himself from their clutches.

Finally he was dropped on the ground, his hands and feet secured in a way that seemed to be decidedly human, and then the four "birds" vanished, leaving him alone.

CHAPTER V.

THE NIGHT HAWKS.

Tom lay a few minutes blinking up through the foggy air.

The astonishing experience through which he had just passed had quite dazed him.

What did it all mean?

What kind of birds could these be that had suddenly pounced upon him in the unfinished building, borne him to that spot and left him bound hand and foot?

"I must be laboring under some kind of a hallucination brought on by that terrible whack I got when I fell to the floor. Those must have been four men, not birds. I only imagined they looked like birds. Such birds as they appeared to be surely do not exist in creation, especially in the neighborhood of the Massachusetts coast. It was just like a nightmare. Between the fog and the jolt on the head I guess my brains were in shape to see 'most anything. Gee! I can almost see those birds' heads yet. One thing is certain: I'm bound hand and foot with cord, and birds couldn't do that, I'm willing to swear. I'm satisfied that I fell into the hands of the four tramps who are living on

this island. Well, just let me get away, and I'll bet I'll have the constable over here to-morrow to give them free board and lodging in the county jail."

Tom tugged away at his bonds for a while to no purpose, but at length one of the strands came loose and he pulled one of his hands out of limbo.

The other followed as a matter of course.

Then with his jackknife he freed his ankles and stood up.

He walked to the inner edge of the clearing, whence he caught a view of the hermit's living room, and looked across the opening.

He saw shadows moving around on the inside.

"They're all in there now. I'll just go over and take a good look at those chaps, so that I'll know them again."

Between the fog and the gloom of the night Tom had little fear that his approach to that part of the building he was aiming at would be noticed, even if one of the occupants of the room chanced to look out of the window.

He took care to watch that he didn't stumble over some obstruction in his path and thus call attention to his presence.

At length he reached the window through which the light shone and peered into the hermit's living room.

There he saw four men, sure enough.

They were seated around the table, from which the dishes had been removed and a demijohn and four glasses substituted therefor.

Each man had a cigar between his teeth, and the four were laughing and talking together in a social way.

"There's nothing birdlike about those chaps now," mused Tom. "I wonder how I ever imagined they were gigantic birds?"

As Tom began to chuckle at his error his eyes rested on four objects placed upon a low shelf.

The chuckle died away in his throat and a look of astonishment came over his face.

There stood four great green birds' heads all in a row, with staring white eyes and enormous beaks, the very counterpart of what he had so indistinctly seen after his fall in the unfinished part of the building.

He gazed at them with open mouth and staring eyes.

"Great Solomon! The very birds I saw," he exclaimed. "But those are only birds' heads. What are they doing there? They were not there when I entered that room a little while ago."

He scratched his head in a perplexed way for a moment or two.

Suddenly a light flooded his mind.

"Why, those must be disguises worn by those men. Those chaps had the heads on when they grabbed me, and I didn't imagine anything at all. What I saw actually existed before my eyes. Those men don't look at all like tramps. Two of them have watch chains. Now what do they want with those grotesque bird masks, such as are worn on the stage in certain spectacles? And why are they living on this island?"

While Tom was trying to figure this problem out, some

portion of the conversation going on within reached his ears.

"How long do you think it will be safe to stay in this neighborhood, Bentley?" asked the stoutest man of the four of his companion on the right, a tall, thin, bilious-looking fellow.

"How long?" replied the other, blowing out a cloud of cigar smoke. "Well, I calculated on staying here all summer."

"You mustn't forget that there's a thousand dollars reward out for us, and when to-day's robbery of the Manson cottage becomes generally known I shouldn't be surprised if the reward was doubled."

"Gee whiz!" said Tom to himself. "These men must be the Night Hawks—the fellows who cleaned out several residences on the suburbs of the town last spring, and who lately robbed the Stanbury post-office and Deacon White's house. Downey said this morning that four men disguised with birds' heads were seen crossing the bridge in a red auto on the night of the White robbery. There's the birds' heads on the shelf yonder." Yes, I am satisfied these are the Night Hawks."

He listened again to the conversation.

"S'pose there is?" replied Bentley. "We can lie low here for a week until the people think we're gone off somewhere else, then we can tackle another one of the cottages. Judge Brown's place, for instance, offers good swag. I've noticed that his women folks make a fine display of their diamonds. Then there is the Gilbert cottage on the point. He's president of the Mavernick National Bank, and is worth half a million easy enough."

"But that boy we caught nosing around here a little while ago and left bound among the trees. He may give us away as soon as we put him ashore. We made a mistake appearing before him in our bird masks. That was your idea, Baldy"—and the speaker looked at the man on his left—"and I'm bound to say it was a bad one."

"It prevented him from identifying our faces, didn't it?" retorted the individual addressed as Baldy.

"I vote that we keep the boy here until we are through with this island," put in the fourth man.

"I don't like that plan," said Bentley. "We'd have to watch him pretty close to make sure that he did not escape. Then no doubt his people would come here looking for him, and that would give us more trouble."

"Why should they think he's on this island?" asked Baldy. "He must have got ashore here by accident in the fog. What else should bring him to the island at this time of night?"

"Instead of taking him ashore, as we decided on a while ago, I suggest that we hunt up his boat, drop him in it just as he is, and cast him adrift when the tide begins to ebb. Then he'll be carried out to sea," said the stout man.

"That looks too much like murder, and I object," interposed the fourth man.

"You're too particular altogether," sneered the stout crook.

"I'm not anxious to put my neck in a halter," replied the other, warmly.

"Oh, he'd probably be rescued before he reached the ocean," replied the stout man, carelessly. "If he wasn't, who'd be the wiser as to what happened to him?"

The fourth man, whose name was Sandy, did not take at all kindly to this way of getting rid of the boy.

He wanted him put ashore, as originally determined on.

"Well, never mind the boy now. There's time enough to consider him," said Bentley, who appeared to be the leading spirit of the four. "We want to talk about a hiding-place for our swag, so that if a search party should come over here it will not be found. I looked the second floor all over to-night for a place between the walls that looked to be suitable, but could find none. I think the best thing is to bury it, after all."

"Where shall we bury it—in the woods or under the flooring of this room?" asked Baldy.

"We'll pry up the hearthstone, dig a hole deep enough to accommodate the box the stuff is in now, and secrete it there. I defy any detective to nose it out. However, I'm not looking for a detective to come to this island. We've been seen in that red auto of ours, you know, and the detectives will go searching for that in order to spot us. The auto is black by this time, and laid up in a Boston garage, so it's my opinion they'll have a long hunt," said Bentley, with a chuckle.

The others agreed that under the hearthstone was a good place to hide their booty, so after they had finished their cigars Bentley and the stout crook started in and pried up the stone.

A shovel that stood in a corner was brought into use and a considerable quantity of earth was removed, leaving a hole about two feet deep, the same in length, and a foot and a half wide.

Into this was deposited a mahogany box which had been covered up in a corner, and the box fitted the hole snugly.

"When that box is full we'll find another hiding-place for any additional plunder," said Bentley, after the hearthstone had been replaced and all tell-tale signs carefully brushed away.

The four men then resumed their places at the table, filled their glasses from the jug, and seemed disposed to make a night of it.

CHAPTER VI.

TOM DECIDES TO CAPTURE THE NIGHT HAWKS IF HE CAN.

Tom concluded he had heard all that he wanted to.

He had seen where the Night Hawks buried their latest booty, and knew he would be able to spot it again.

The four crooks were reasonably certain to continue to make Hermit Island, as it was now called, their rendezvous for some time to come.

There was a standing reward of one thousand dollars for their capture and conviction, and Tom, who was developing

a great eye for business, mentally determined, with the help of Jack Harding, to earn that money.

He had a business scheme in view which needed money for its development, consequently half of the proclaimed reward would come in handy, while the other half would be equally acceptable to Harding, who was looking forward to an early marriage with Dora Travers.

Tom did not believe in putting off until a future time what could be done right away, so he resolved to attempt the capture of the Night Hawks as soon as he could.

As the first step toward that desirable end, and to block the rascals from getting away from the island, the boy set out at once to find the boat they used to cross the stretch of water between the island and the main shore.

He walked through the wood, from the building until he gained the shore, and this he followed, looking toward the town.

His own boat lay in a little cove on the opposite side of the island, but, as the circumference of the wooded isle was not very great, it would not take him long to row around to the cove after he had found the crooks' boat.

He saw that a light breeze had started up and that the fog had grown thinner, so he judged his passengers were impatiently awaiting his return, and probably wondering at the length of time he had remained away.

In his opinion, the boat he was looking for could not be very far from the nearest point between the shore and the house, and he was right in his conjecture.

He found it tied to a stout stake driven into the sand.

It took him but a moment to untie the painter, get out the oars and commence pulling around the island toward the cove.

Inside of fifteen minutes, during which the mist had cleared away materially, he made out the outlines of the Seadrift in the little indentation, and he rowed alongside of her.

"Hello! is that you, Travers?" asked the leader of the camping-out party. "Where the dickens have you been so long? We might have been halfway to town by this time, for a light breeze came up about twenty minutes ago."

"I got into a little trouble over at the house and couldn't get back any sooner," replied Tom, as he tied the painter of the rowboat to a cleat in the stern of the Seadrift and stepped aboard of the latter.

"What trouble did you get into?" asked his passenger, curiously.

"Well, I had a tumble from a ladder that kind of knocked me silly," answered Tom, who did not care to enlighten the young men regarding the real state of affairs. "I wanted to find out something about that light that was shining from the second story of the building. I started up a ladder, but the old thing snapped in two when I was near the top and I got a nasty fall."

"Oh, that was it, eh?" asked the head clerk. "It was a lucky thing that you did not break your neck—lucky for us, too, for if you hadn't turned up we'd have had to stay here all night."

Tom laughed as he swung the boom out so as to catch the light wind, then, seating himself on the weather side of the helm, he steered the sailboat out of the cove.

By the time the boat had gone a quarter of a mile the fog had entirely disappeared.

The stars were out in full force, and the skyrockets from every section of the town were trying to rival their brilliancy.

In three-quarters of an hour the Seadrift reached the main wharf, where her passengers disembarked, bade good-bye to the young skipper, and started with their traps for the railroad station.

When Tom hauled out from the wharf and headed for home, Patty made her reappearance from the cabin.

"Hungry, Patty?" asked Tom, with a smile.

The girl admitted that she was.

"So am I. It's nearly nine o'clock—more than eight hours since we had our lunch. If it hadn't been for the calm and the fog we'd have reached town around half-past five, and been home before six. When we drifted into the cove at Hermit Island you were asleep. I guess you've had boating enough for one day."

It didn't take long to run over to the little wharf on the water-front of the Travers property.

Tom made the boat fast, lowered the sail, but did not tidy it up, and put the stops about it, for he expected to run over to Hermit Island later on with Harding, and then, taking Patty by the hand, they skipped up to the house.

"You've made a long day of it, Tom," said his mother, who was sitting on the side porch watching the fireworks.

"Couldn't help it, mother. We were caught in the fog and becalmed at the same time. I'm thankful we got here as soon as we have. Anything to eat? Patty and I are famished."

"Yes; you'll find your suppers in the oven and the tea on the top of the stove. I left a light in the kitchen. You'd both better eat there, as the dining table is cleared off."

"All right, mother," replied Tom, cheerfully. "Was Mr. Spriggins here after Patty?"

"No."

"I guess he has too much respect for the day to do any dirty work for Nathan Kemp," said Tom. "The most he could have done, anyway, was to have taken Patty over to his house and kept her there if she refused to go back to the Kemps. To-morrow we'll bring her case before the magistrate ourselves and see if we can't squelch Mr. Kemp and his sister for good and all, as far as Patty is concerned. They have forfeited all right to her services by their treatment of her, and I have no doubt that Patty will be allowed to stay with us, if she so desires."

Tom then went into the kitchen, to find Patty setting the little table there for their supper, and in a couple of minutes the two young people were eating away as happy as though they had not a trouble in the world.

"Where's Dora, mother?" asked Tom, when he came out on the porch after the meal. "Off with Jack to see the fireworks?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Travers.

"Well, I guess Patty and I will go down to the green, too. There must be quite a mob watching the pyrotechnics. Won't you come with us?"

"No; I can see all I wish to from here."

"You can only see the rockets and bombs that go above the housetops. You miss the set pieces and other display."

"And I avoid the crowd. It is much more enjoyable to sit here and enjoy the cool breeze from the bay and see a portion of the fireworks than to stand for a couple of hours in a hot, perspiring crowd, in order to get a fleeting glimpse of the whole show."

"I guess you're right, mother. But Patty and I won't mind the crowd."

And they did not, for they were soon wedged into the thickest of it, watching the fizzing design of "Washington Crossing the Delaware."

CHAPTER VII.

TRYING TO EARN THE REWARD.

When Tom and Patty got back to the cottage they found Jack Harding and Dora standing at the gate.

"I want to see you before you go home, Jack," said Tom. "You'll find me sitting on the kitchen doorstep."

"All right," replied Jack, laughingly.

Fifteen minutes later he joined Tom at the spot mentioned.

"Well, Tom, here I am at your service," he said, taking a seat beside his future brother-in-law.

"I've got something important to talk to you about," began Tom.

"I'm ready to hear it."

"Something that will put five hundred dollars in each of our pockets if we can get it through."

"Five hundred dollars, eh?" replied Harding. "That sounds good. What is this scheme?"

"You've heard about the Night Hawks, of course—the four crooks who, disguised with birds' heads, robbed a number of houses in this neighborhood last spring?"

"Of course, I heard about them at the time."

"Did you hear that they had turned up again—that they robbed the Stansbury post-office the other night, also Deacon White's house?"

"No; is that a fact?"

"Yes; and they went through the Manson cottage this afternoon."

"You don't say!"

"Sure thing. There's a standing reward of one thousand dollars for their capture."

"So I heard."

"Well, it's up to us now to earn that money."

"Up to us! What do you mean?" asked Harding, in surprise.

"I mean I know exactly where those four rascals are in hiding."

"You do?" in astonishment.

"I do."

"Where?"

"On Hermit Island."

"How do you know that?"

"I saw them there to-night."

"You did?"

"I did. You know that Patty and I were gone all day on the bay in the Seadrift?"

"So I heard when I came after Dora this afternoon."

"We put ashore at Hermit Island about ten o'clock."

"And you saw the four rascals there, eh?"

"Not then. They were away, but I saw evidence that four persons, whom I thought to be tramps, were living in the old hermit's quarters."

"Well?"

"Then, after eating our lunch on the island, I put off down the bay for Deer Island to take off those Boston bank clerks I carried down yesterday morning."

Jack nodded.

"After reaching the island and taking them aboard the fog began to come up, and it caught us before we had gone a great way. By and by the wind dropped entirely and we drifted along until dark, when we floated into a cove of Hermit Island. Then it was we saw a light shining through the fog and gloom, and I decided that it came from the second story of the unfinished hotel building on the island. I was curious to learn who was on the island, so I took the boat's lantern and started on a tour of investigation."

Tom then went on to relate all that befell him on the island, with which the reader is already familiar.

Jack Harding listened to his story with great interest and curiosity.

"So they've got their plunder buried under the hearth-stone of that room, eh?"

"That's right," nodded Tom.

"You carried off their boat so they couldn't get away from the island?"

"I did."

"That was a clever move," replied Harding; "but when they find themselves cooped up they'll be uncommonly watchful against capture. There are four of them, probably armed, and may be expected to put up a desperate resistance. How do you think that you and I can do them up? It's too big a contract, Tom, for us to undertake."

Tom now began to think so himself, but he didn't want to admit it.

"But there's one thousand dollars in it, and I don't want to lose my share of it. I need the money to start my business."

"I'm willing to help you earn it, Tom," replied Jack, "but I'm afraid that in this case the odds are too great against us. We'd better take Constable Spriggins with us and divide the reward in thirds. Even with him we're more than likely to have our hands full, unless we can take the rascals by surprise."

"My idea was that if we went down to the island to-night we stood a good chance of catching them off their guard," said Tom. "I left them drinking and enjoying themselves. They feel pretty safe there at present. Suppose we go down and see how the land lies, anyway. You've got a revolver at your room, and I'll get father's. Are you game to do it?"

"I am if you are," replied Jack; "but I still think it would be wiser for us to take the constable along. There is considerable power in the majesty of the law, Tom."

"Majesty of the law is good, Jack, but I think a six-shooter is better," laughed Tom. "You go and get your gun and I'll wait for you at the wharf."

Jack, although he regarded the adventure as a rash one, was prepared to back Tom up, and so he departed for his home to get his weapon.

Tom went to his room and got the revolver that had belonged to his father and then made his way down to the boat.

It was about midnight; a fresh breeze was blowing that promised a quick trip to the island, and the sky was now somewhat overcast.

Jack returned in about twenty minutes; then they raised the sail and started down the bay at a merry clip, Tom at the wheel.

Inside of another twenty minutes the Seadrift put into the cove where she had already been twice that day, or rather the day before, as it was now nearing one o'clock.

The waves plashed noisily on the shore, and the wind, which was steadily rising, souged through the trees that heavily covered the island.

Tom and his friend Jack jumped ashore, tied the painter to the tree, and then started for the unfinished building in the clearing.

When they reached the inner line of trees they paused to reconnoiter the house.

There was a light in the room occupied by the crooks.

"The rascals are still awake," said Harding.

"If they are moving around we ought to see them through that window," said Tom, after the lapse of five minutes. "Maybe they've fallen asleep and left the light burning."

After waiting a while longer and seeing no sign of life through the window, Tom proposed that they creep up and look in to see what the men were doing.

To this Harding agreed.

So they advanced across the open ground with due caution, holding their revolvers ready for instant use.

Glancing in through the window, they saw the four men sprawled out asleep, with their arms on the table and heads buried in them.

"I wonder if they're drunk?" queried Tom.

"They look as if they might be, but you can't tell for sure," replied Jack.

"There are the birds' heads on that shelf," said Tom.

"I see them. Mighty curious-looking birds, aren't they?"

"You'd have thought so if you'd seen them the way I did first," replied Tom. "Well, what are we going to do, Jack?"

There's a lot of light rope in the corner near the stove. Do you think we could manage to tie them to the chairs without waking them? Then you could stand guard over them while I went back to town and notified the head constable that we had captured them. That should entitle us to the reward."

"I think that's rather a ticklish proposition," answered Jack. "Two of those chaps look uncommonly tough and capable of putting up a stiff fight. If we didn't succeed in surprising the bunch completely there'd be something doing."

The rascals were lying about in such an awkward way that it looked impossible to tie them in any effective manner without disturbing them.

While Tom and his companion were considering the difficulties of the situation the man known as Baldy moved, raised his head and finally sat up.

He looked at his companions a moment or two, then got up and shook the fellow called Sandy.

Sandy sat up, and Baldy made a sign to him that he seemed to understand.

Both picked up their hats and walked toward the door.

"We'll have to hide, Jack," warned Tom. "They're coming outside."

They hastened to get behind a small pile of debris nearby and then awaited further developments.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTURE OF THE NIGHT HAWKS.

Baldy opened the door, and he and Sandy came out and closed it after them.

Then both, after a glance at the cloudy sky, moved deliberately toward the pile of debris and sat down.

Had they used their eyes to good advantage they must have seen Tom and Harding crouching behind the mound.

But they didn't, for they had not the slightest suspicion that any intruders were on the island at the moment.

"Sandy," said Baldy, in a confidential tone, "are you and me of one mind?"

"I reckon we are, Baldy," was the reply.

"We are both agreed that the best thing we can do is to get our flukes on the swag already secured and light out for New York, leavin' Bentley and Bud Smith to shift for themselves."

"That suits me, if the thing can be safely done," replied Sandy.

"It's got to be done, pal, and to-night is the time to do it. All we have to do is to dig up that box, take it down to the boat and make off. They won't be able to follow us, so we kin get a good start."

"If they should catch us tryin' the dodge on, Baldy, it wouldn't be healthy for us."

"We mustn't let 'em catch us, Sandy. I'm determined

to cut loose from them chaps. Bud is too bad-minded to suit me. He ain't got no respect for human life, and we have, Sandy. I'm not achin' to have my neck stretched. I draw a line at that kind of thing. Bud wants to do up that boy we ketched in the buildin' to-night, and Bentley won't stand in his way. If them two hadn't got blazin' drunk with the contents of that demijohn I'll bet that boy would be floatin' out to sea, bound hand and foot, by this time."

"I reckon he would," admitted Sandy.

"It ain't certain, as things stand, but Bud and Bentley will carry him into the cellar in the mornin' and shoot him. I wouldn't trust neither of them. When we get the box aboard the rowboat we'll go and cut the boy loose and tell him to mosey as soon as he kin. He's got a boat somewhere along shore, 'cause he couldn't have walked here. Then we'll make for the p'int yonder, steal one of them sailboats that's anchored there, and sail round to Nanticoke, where we'll arrive in time to take the first train for New York. We kin check the box through as baggage."

"It's a good scheme," assented Sandy, "if it will only work."

"It's got to work, Sandy. Them two chaps are b'ilin' drunk and won't know what we're up to."

"Are you sure they're as drunk as that?"

"If they ain't, they kin stand a heap more liquor than I think they kin."

"I don't like to take no chances, Baldy. I reckon if they woke up too soon we might feel an ounce of lead in our innards."

"Well, Sandy, we kin try and see how drunk they are."

"How are you goin' to do it?"

"Give 'em a shake-up."

"And if they wake up, what then?"

"We'll tell 'em it's time to turn in."

"It's a good idea, Baldy."

"Sure it is. If they won't wake easy, then we'll get their guns away to make sure we don't get hurt. After that we'll dig up the box and mosey."

"Let's get about it, then. We can't get away too quick from this place to suit me."

The rascals rose from the pile of debris and returned to the house.

"Now what do you think of that?" said Tom, as soon as they had entered the room.

"I think it's first class. Those two chaps will play right into our hands," replied Harding. "Come back to the window and let's watch them."

Tom and Jack resumed their former positions under the window.

They saw Baldy and Sandy bending over their companions.

In a moment or two each had a revolver in his hand, which he stuffed into his pocket.

Then they got some of the rope and tied Bentley and Bud Smith to their chairs.

Jack punched Tom in the ribs and chuckled.

"They're doing the job for us, Tom," he said. "We'll only have those two to tackle, and we ought to be able to knock them both out by catching them off their guard."

Baldy and Sandy, having secured their dangerous associates to their satisfaction, lost no time in removing the hearthstone and getting the mahogany box out of the hole.

It had a handle at each end and was comparatively easy to carry.

When Baldy turned the light low Tom and Jack concluded it was time to change their base of operations.

"Where did you find their boat, Tom?" asked Jack.

"Over yonder, tied to a stake in the beach."

"Then we'd better get over there and lay for these chaps. As soon as we have captured them the game will be in our hands."

So Tom and Harding made for the wood as fast as they could, and soon reached the vicinity where the boat had been tied.

"Pick up a club, Tom," said Jack, looking around for a stout piece of wood for himself. "Then when they come along with the box we'll spring out of the shrubbery and knock them down."

"How are we going to secure them?" asked Tom.

"We'll get their guns away from them, and I'll stand over them with my revolver while you run back to the house and get some of that rope."

"All right," replied Tom, and they concealed themselves and waited.

In a quarter of an hour they heard the two crooks coming with the box between them.

Just as they passed the hidden watchers Tom and Jack rose up behind them and dealt each a stunning blow on the head.

Down they went, box and all, and lay where they had fallen without a movement.

"I hope we didn't kill them," said Tom, a bit anxiously, as he looked down at the white faces of the two rascals.

"Not much danger of that," answered Jack, coolly. "Those bullet heads ought to be able to stand a policeman's locust, and that's harder than these bits of wood. Come, now, let's disarm them before they come to."

They found four revolvers on them, two of which belonged to their companions.

"We have quite an armament now," laughed Jack. "Help me drag them down on the shore and prop them up against that rock."

The unconscious rascals were placed in the position indicated by Harding.

"Now hustle over to the house for that rope, Tom, then we'll have these two foxy chaps dead to rights."

Tom was back inside of five minutes with the cord, and he helped Jack tie the two Night Hawks in a way that rendered them completely helpless.

"Now we'll tackle the other two at the house," said Harding, "and then we'll bring them down here and leave them while we sail the boat around."

In spite of the fact that the two scoundrels were stupidly

drunk, Tom experienced a feeling of nervousness while he assisted Jack in cutting them loose, one at a time, from the chairs, and retying them in a more secure fashion.

At length the job was done and the four Night Hawks were in their power.

Taking one of the crooks at a time, they carried them to the shore where their two companions were still in a state of insensibility.

Then they went to the cove, boarded the Seadrift, and sailed her around to that part of the island.

After placing the mahogany box in the cuddy, they dumped the four crooks in after it, pushed off and started for Barmouth.

It was nearly three o'clock when Tom aroused Constable Spriggins from his bed to tell him about the capture of the Night Hawks.

The officer could hardly believe his ears.

He knew, however, that Tom Travers was not a practical joker, so he hitched up his light wagon and drove with the boy down to the Travers dock.

The four rascals were pulled out of the cuddy and loaded on the wagon, then the mahogany box with its valuable contents followed, and last of all came the papier-mache birds' heads, which Tom and Jack had taken care to bring along as evidence of the identity of their prisoners.

With this load the constable drove off for the county jail, while Tom and his friend Jack separated for the night, after congratulating each other over the prospect of soon pocketing the reward for the capture of the Night Hawks.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INVENTION.

The Barmouth Daily Courant next morning printed a column story, embellished with a formidable scare head, of the capture of the Night Hawks by Tom Travers and Jack Harding on Hermit Island.

The particulars were furnished by the constable and put in type by the foreman of the paper, for the editorial force had retired when the news reached the Courant office.

The editor and proprietor of the paper was therefore as much surprised as any one else when he saw the story in print.

Tom and the young blacksmith were naturally the heroes of the hour, and quite a crowd of curious townspeople visited the smithy to learn further particulars of the astonishing affair.

Every boy in town who knew Tom tried to hunt him up for a similar reason, but, as he was taking a good, long sleep in his room, he was not visible until the afternoon.

A Courant reporter had to make three calls at his house before he got the desired chance to interview him for the afternoon edition.

Nathan Kemp also made another call at the cottage in an ineffectual attempt to get Patty Penrose to go back to his house, but the girl refused to do so, and he retired greatly chagrined, for the magistrate had refused to enter-

tain his complaint against Patty, and ruled that she had a right to secede from his household if she chose to do so.

The court-house was crowded when the four crooks were brought up for their preliminary examination, at which Tom and Jack were the star witnesses.

There were a dozen complainants against the rascals, most of whom identified a considerable portion of their stolen property among the plunder which the mahogany box contained.

The evidence was conclusive, and the magistrate held the men for trial.

We may as well say here that they were duly tried, convicted and sent to the State prison for a term of years.

Everybody agreed that Tom and Jack had fairly earned the one thousand dollars reward, and it was paid over to them.

Mr. Manson, whose cottage had been robbed, was so pleased to get his property back that he sent Tom and Harding each a hundred-dollar bill, so that altogether they pocketed six hundred dollars each by their night adventure on the island.

During July, August and September Tom earned a good many dollars with his boat, and when not so employed he was perfecting arrangements to launch his patent unexcelled shoe polish on the market.

This polish was something new and unique in its line.

Tom, while trying to manufacture a shoe luster with a recipe he had picked out of an old almanac, had accidentally evolved a wonderful kind of compound that gave a water-proof gloss to even the oldest and most dilapidated-looking shoe.

It all came about through inadvertently emptying the contents of a wrong bottle into the liquid mass while mixing it.

He did not discover his error until the polish was ready for bottling, and before throwing it away in disgust he applied some of the stuff to an ancient pair of shoes in the garret, just to see what effect it would have on them.

The result was so astonishing that he experimented further, to make sure that the effect was as it appeared to be.

He found that leather coated with his new polish took on a wonderfully rich gloss that shone like French wood polish, and he also discovered that water had no effect on it in the way of dimming it.

Furthermore, when bespattered with mud all that was necessary to restore it to its original luster was a damp cloth.

How long this polish would last after one application to a shoe Tom had not yet been able to tell, for after two months' wear in all weathers he found that a sample pair of his own shoes was still capable of appearing in polite society after a good rubbing with a damp rag.

From present indications one bottle of his polish would last a person an indefinite time.

"I'm afraid the thing is too good," he remarked to Jack one day, "for it looks as if once a pair of shoes is properly coated with it they will never require a second one."

"Are you going to put all the bootblacks out of business, Tom?" laughed Harding.

"I wouldn't be surprised but I may in time."

"What is the name of this remarkable preparation?"

"It hasn't any name yet. I am hunting for one. Perhaps you might think of a good title for it yourself."

Jack, however, shook his head.

"I am not good at such things. I wouldn't think of a suitable name for your preparation in an age."

"I was thinking of calling it 'Polishine.'"

"That isn't so bad. It certainly does not seem to come off, no matter what you do to it."

"That's both the advantage and disadvantage of it—the advantage to the user, the disadvantage to the seller, for he never can expect to sell a second bottle to the same customer unless the bottle is lost or leaks."

"Are you going to make it yourself and market it, or lease your patent out?"

"I am going to make it myself, or rather Patty is, at first. As soon as I get up a demand for the article I'll hire somebody to manufacture it, Patty will take charge of the office and salesroom, and I'll go on the road in earnest."

"How do you expect to create a demand?"

"By advertising it in the newspapers, giving public demonstrations of its superiority as a shoe polish, and placing sample bottles on sale at the appropriate stores, not only in this town, but in Boston and all large neighboring places."

"That will take a lot of money, Tom. Your six hundred dollars won't go very far."

"Oh, I'll have to creep before I can walk—that is, I'll have to go slow at first. I'm young yet and have a lot of time ahead to build the business up."

"When are you going to start in?"

"Right away. I'm not going to sleep over this thing, bet your life. I've got all my plans laid out. I'll have a gross of wide-mouthed bottles down here in a few days from the Nanticoke Glass Works. I've given an order for twelve gross as a starter. Patty will have all the work she wants manufacturing and putting up the polish, while I devote my time to the outside business. I'm going to canvass this town thoroughly so as to get my hand in."

"Well, Tom, I wish you all the success in the world in your new enterprise. You and Patty ought to make a good team. She thinks the world of you, and you can depend that she'll do all she can to help you along."

"Patty is all right. She takes to the polish like a duck to the water. She thinks whatever I get up is bound to go."

"It's my opinion, from what I know of you, Tom, that it won't be your fault if your polish doesn't go. You've got the greatest eye for business of any boy I ever knew."

CHAPTER X.

PUSHING THE MAGIC POLISH.

A few days later the inhabitants of Barmouth noticed that during the preceding night a new poster had been pasted up all about town.

In size it was 24 by 36 inches.

It represented a brilliantly red sun with rays shooting out from it all around.

On the disk was printed in big black type the word "Polishine."

Beneath the sun was the legend: "Magic Shoe Polish—the Greatest Ever."

That day show cards appeared in all the grocery stores, shoe stores, and divers other stores, bearing a reduced facsimile of the poster.

They were flanked with bottles bearing an attractive label, whose distinguishing feature was a small reproduction of the cards.

These advertisements attracted considerable attention.

People began inquiring about the new shoe polish, and almost everybody bought a bottle to try.

In a week half the people in Barmouth were advertising the polish on their footgear and talking about its remarkable properties.

Tom Travers received so many congratulations upon the wonderful properties of his product that if he hadn't been a level lad he probably would have got a swelled head.

It was soon noticed that the cowhide boots of the neighboring farmers and even their help had lost their customary rusty tint and sparkled in the sun like the glass slippers of Cinderella.

Before long nobody had the nerve to appear abroad without the shine.

As a matter of course the Daily Courant printed an article about the astonishing transformation in the pedal attachments of the good people of Barmouth.

This paper, being circulated throughout all the adjoining villages, caused a rush of orders for "Polishine" to the stores that handled it.

In a local way Tom's shoe polish was becoming quite celebrated.

Tom now decided to enlarge his field of operations.

So he went to Boston with a large supply of his stuff and advertising matter and began a systematic canvass of the appropriate stores there.

He got out a fresh supply of posters and had a bill-posting company placard them on every available board throughout the city.

Then he took out a peddler's license, hired a horse and wagon, took up a position at various prominent corners and began to give demonstrations of his polish.

He was a convincing and energetic talker, and found no difficulty in disposing of hundreds of small bottles of the stuff at ten cents each.

The regular-sized bottles, sold at the stores, were twenty-five cents each, the profit to the seller being forty per cent.

Wintry weather coming on, he gave up this strenuous method of advertising and took to the road, visiting every town of importance from one end of the State to the other before the balmy atmosphere of a new spring came around again.

While he was away Patty Penrose bore the burden of

the manufacturing and shipping end of the business in a way that called for his most enthusiastic approval.

If Tom had an eye for business, she seemed to have two.

She developed an amazing amount of energy for a girl, especially of her years.

She thought of nothing outside the interests of the "Magic Shoe Polish," unless it was Tom himself.

When she talked about "Polishine" her face shone as if it reflected the shining qualities of the compound Tom was pushing for all he was worth.

The demand for the magic preparation gradually exceeded Patty's ability to produce it, and so, with Tom's approval, she rented a small store in the business section of Barmouth for a sales depot and hired two girls to make the polish and put it up in a big rear room.

As Patty was growing prettier and more vivacious every day, the store soon became a popular resort for young chaps who had taken a liking to the girl.

They bought unnumbered ten-cent bottles of the polish as an excuse for speaking to her, and they put so many unnecessary coats of the stuff on their shoes that they sparkled with a brilliance that caused people to wonder if they were acting as walking advertisements of Tom's preparation.

In the window of the store Patty had a dozen highly polished shoes ranged in a row, and above each was a small faucet of running water which inundated the shoes.

It was about this time that Tom advertised for the handsomest girl in Boston.

Of course he had several hundred applicants.

Most of them were really beauties, and he had a difficult job choosing one from the lot.

This young lady soon appeared in the show window of the most prominent shoe store in the city—a store owned by Mr. Manson, the gentleman who spent his summers with his family at his cottage in Barmouth.

This gentleman had not forgotten the debt he owed Tom Travers and Jack Harding for the recovery of many valuable heirlooms stolen by the four Night Hawks.

He took a great interest in Tom's shoe polish, as well as in the boy's businesslike address, and when Travers suggested that it would be a good advertisement for both of them if he were permitted to put a handsome girl in one of his show windows for the purpose of giving a demonstration of the virtues of the magic shoe polish the gentleman readily consented.

The result was that a throng of ladies and gentlemen gathered every day in front of the window, and the demonstration soon proved to be a winner.

The magic polish began to sell like hot cakes.

The men stopped to look at the girl, and soon got interested in the unfadeable luster that looked them in the face from the display of shoes on the glass shelves.

The young lady would take a shoe at random from a shelf, thrust the polished part in a fancy pail of water and then rub it vigorously with a cloth.

Instead of dimming or destroying the shine, it only made it glow the brighter.

Then she would hold up a show card with the words:

"Try a bottle of Polishine. One application will outlast the shoe. Twenty-five cents a bottle."

Tom opened a branch office on Washington Street in a big building, as he was now making a good profit.

He advertised for canvassers to sell the polish from house to house, and soon had a dozen men at the work in the residential sections of Boston.

Mr. Manson recommended the polish to the attention of the heads of the big shoe factories in Lynn and other places where he purchased his stock in trade.

Tom made a personal call at each establishment and gave a demonstration of what his magic polish would accomplish.

He caught three factories right off on a year's contract, and others fell in line when their managers saw the superiority of "Polishine" over the standard polishes on the market.

The consequence was Tom had to increase his facilities for the manufacture of the magic preparation.

A dozen girls were employed to make and put it up for market, with Patty Penrose as general manager of the plant.

She was no longer seen in the little store, but had a desk in the shipping and packing department in the big rear room.

Her host of admirers missed her, and there was a great falling off in the store sales of ten-cent bottles.

Tom was making the business hum, though he was not making very much money yet, as he put nearly all his profits into advertising his preparation and keeping it before the public.

He was working for the future, not the present.

It would take years of energetic work to shove his "Polishine" into such prominence that it would sell itself all over the country.

Long before that dream was fully realized he would have to put up a factory capable of turning out cases on cases of bottles of his polish every working day of the year.

However, things were going very well at present.

His sales were steadily on the increase, and the prospects ahead were bright and rosy.

CHAPTER XI.

TOM DEMONSTRATES THAT HE IS NOT ASLEEP.

It was in the early days of summer that Tom Travers packed his grip and took a train for Fall River that connected with a boat for New York.

A large case of his "Polishine" had preceded him by express.

He planned to remain two or three weeks in the metropolis to introduce his magic polish to the trade, and incidentally to the general public also.

On the boat he read a paragraph in an afternoon daily which stated that Bud Smith, one of the Night Hawks he and Jack Harding had captured and helped convict, had escaped from the State prison.

"He was the worst of the bunch," he mused. "It's always the hardest cases that work their way to freedom. I suppose he'll be caught, however."

Tom reached New York in the morning, registered at a second-class hotel, had his breakfast, and then started out to do business.

He had enough samples and his regular paraphernalia to commence with, and, having taken down the addresses of the wholesale grocery houses, he began operations with them.

He spent two days trying to convince the management of these establishments that "Polishine" made every other shoe polish on the market look like a superannuated veteran beside a spick and span new recruit.

He found that it isn't the best always that comes to the front until there is a good-sized demand behind to enforce an appreciation of its merits.

However, he got one house to take hold of it, and that was something.

Then he tackled the great department stores.

One big Sixth Avenue emporium permitted him to introduce a demonstrator, and he advertised for a pretty girl who could talk well.

He got one to his liking, instructed her in the business of bringing out all there was in the magic polish, and established her at the department store in question.

This proved to be one of the most effective ways of introducing his preparation to the attention of the ladies of New York, who in turn soon made their husbands acquainted with its fine qualities.

It was such a success that Tom succeeded in getting a demonstrator into three other big department stores.

He also introduced demonstrators in the windows of prominent shoe and other stores with equal success, and he called for so much stock from Barmouth that Patty had to increase the working force by six more girls.

By this time Tom had got three more wholesale grocery stores in line, and a score of large shoe stores to handle his magic shoe polish.

After spending a month around New York he opened an agency for his "Polishine" and hired a smart young man to look after his interests and push the preparation for all it was worth.

When Tom got back to Barmouth he found that Patty was looking tired and overworked.

"I'm afraid the business is getting too much for you, Patty," he said in a tone of some concern.

"I am doing the best I can, Tom," said the girl, with one of her winsome smiles.

"I know you are," he replied earnestly. "You've been

doing fine ever since I started—as good as a man, every bit; but you're not as strong as a man, and you'll have to take a vacation."

"How can I, Tom?" she asked wistfully. "Unless you mean to stay here for a time and look after matters yourself."

"Well, I can do that, of course, but I had different plans."

"Then how can I leave the business?"

"I'll manage somehow. I can't afford to have you get sick, Patty. You're the best little girl in all the world. You've taken as much interest in this business as if you were a full partner instead of a mere employee. I know you have done that for my sake. Isn't that so, Patty?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Well, you're going to be a full partner some day, aren't you?"

"Me?" she exclaimed, opening her pretty eyes in surprise.

"Who else? You're going to marry me, aren't you, by and by?"

"Oh, Tom!" hiding her face in her hands.

She didn't resist when he pulled her head down on his shoulder and kissed her.

"It's yes, isn't it, Patty. You're going to be my partner for life?"

"Yes, Tom, if you wish me to," she answered gently, with a happy light in her eyes.

"Of course I wish you to. Haven't I always wished it?"

"I suppose so."

"You mean you know so," he persisted.

"Yes."

"That's right. Speak up like a little woman. Now you're going to take a vacation, do you understand?"

"Yes, Tom."

"To-morrow will be the Fourth of July again. The hot weather is on, and if you persisted in carrying on the business as you have been doing for these nine months back there'd soon be nothing left of you but a grease spot."

"Oh, what a fib!" she cried, with a laugh.

"Or else you'd be down in the bed sick. Of course, I'm not going to stand for any such thing as that. There's only one Patty in the world, and I can't afford to lose her. It is just a year ago since you emancipated yourself from the clutches of Nathan Kemp and his sister."

"Thanks to you, Tom."

"Well, I'm happy that I had a hand in it, and you have repaid me several hundred times over. Now, I'm going to have a talk with Jack Harding to-night. He's going to marry Dora soon, and I think he can do better for himself and me as the manager of the Polishine Works than as a blacksmith. I can offer him a future worth while, and he's going to accept, or I'll know the reason why not."

"Then you won't want me any more?" she said wistfully.

"Sure I'll want you, after your vacation. You shall take charge of the money end of the business. I'm going to make a company out of this thing. I'll be president and

general manager; you'll be the treasurer, and for a while the bookkeeper and shipping clerk, while Jack will be superintendent of the factory and general boss when I'm away. He'll attend to all the heavy work and help you out when the business grows bigger than it is now."

"That will be nice," she exclaimed enthusiastically.

"Of course we are not going to get married for a while yet, for we're too young. You're only sixteen now, and I'm only seventeen and a half. Besides, I want to put this business squarely on its feet before I can settle down. I've got lots of traveling ahead of me. I'm going to visit all the big cities, even as far west as San Francisco."

"Oh, Tom! as far as that?"

"Sure thing. You can't go to sleep and build a paying business up. A fellow has got to keep on the hustle. You ought to see how hard I had to talk in New York to catch and hold the attention of the business men there. They have no time to lose, and you've got to show cause every time, or you'll get turned down hard. I made up my mind not to be turned down in the long run, and I wasn't. No one in New York had heard of 'Polishine' until I brought it to their notice. It's hard to get a hearing there, for somebody is trying to introduce some kind of a novelty on the market there every day in the year, and working overtime, at that. But I just wedged myself in. I knew the polish would take if it got to the front, and I just made it my business to drag it there. I studied the situation and got busy. Well, to-day it's being sold like hot cakes in four of the big department stores. Three wholesale grocers have taken hold of it and are distributing it among their customers, while two hundred shoe stores have it in stock, and I've got a smart young fellow established in an office who will keep the ball rolling at top speed, and will give no storekeeper who ought to have it rest until he takes hold of it. I'm going to work the same tactics in Chicago and in other big cities, with variations to meet all circumstances. I tell you, Patty, this shoe polish is the best thing of its kind in existence, and nothing short of a universal business upheaval, which isn't likely, is going to prevent me from making the public cotton right to it. A good thing is bound to reach its level, whether it's a man or a product, and Polishine is a good thing, every day in the week, Sunday included."

"My gracious, how you can talk, Tom!" exclaimed Patty, admiringly. "I don't wonder you have made the business boom."

"I believe I talk right to the point, Patty, whether I'm pushing Polishine or making love to you."

"You are certainly very convincing," she replied shyly.

"When a fellow has an eye to business he generally is convincing in his arguments. But there are other ways of convincing people, too."

"What are those?"

"One, for instance, is to let actions speak louder than words."

With that he grabbed the girl in his arms and gave her several kisses.

"Oh, my, aren't you a bear!" she cried, making a feint to box his ears, and then rushing out of the room to hide her blushes.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ESCAPED CONVICT.

That night Tom had an interview with Jack Harding.

"I'm going to offer you the chance of your life, Jack," he said, getting down to business.

"The chance of my life, eh?" laughed Harding.

"Yes. I want you to give up blacksmithing and come in with me."

"Into the shoe polish business?"

"That's right. It's going to make a fortune for me, and I want you to share it."

"That's a pretty liberal proposition, Tom. Anybody would be a fool to refuse sharing another's fortune if the chance was offered to him. I know you've been making out fine so far with Polishine, and I've no doubt there's a big future in it. If you will show me how I can help you make a success of it I am ready to talk business. I've got a thousand dollars saved up that I could put in. Have you spoken to Dora on the subject?"

"Yes, and she's in favor of you taking hold with me."

"That will go a great way with me, for I feel bound to consider your sister's views to a considerable extent."

"Well, Jack, my idea is for you, I and Patty to share equally in the fruits of Polishine. She's already done a man's share in helping me put the business on its feet, and I am bound that she shall have full recognition for her services, apart from the small wages she has been drawing."

Harding nodded his approval.

"The business is already making money, but the most of that money must go right back into it for some time to come in order to increase the volume of business. So far I have done scarcely any advertising in newspapers to speak of. I can't afford to do it in the way it ought to be done, and spasmodic advertising doesn't pay."

"What part of the business do you expect me to look after?" asked Jack.

"The manufacturing part. In fact, I want you to take general charge with Patty of this end of affairs."

"I'm afraid I'll have a heap to learn. You see, I'm a good blacksmith, all right, because I have been educated up in it, but I'd be all at sea at any other vocation at first."

"You're a smart fellow, Jack, and it won't take you long to get into harness. Patty is going to take a month's vacation, and I'm going to stay right here till she comes back to work. I want you to take all the responsibility off her shoulders. She'll have enough to do to run the financial end, look after the books, and keep track of the shipping orders. I want you to pull right in with her and attend to all the details. I'll post you in your duties while she's resting, and then when I start for Chicago, in the early

part of September, I shall look to you to take full charge of affairs here. Patty will help you out if you should feel the need of her advice. You can't go wrong with her at your elbow."

"She's a mighty smart girl, Tom," nodded Jack, "and between you, I and the post, the brightest thing you can do is to marry her after a while."

"Thanks, old chap," laughed Tom. "That's exactly what I mean to do."

"Is that right? Have you really popped the question to her?"

"I have, and she said yes."

"I'm glad to hear it. I've been watching her off and on since you put her in charge of this end of your polish business, and I told Dora more than once that you would miss a whole lot if you let another fellow win Patty away from you."

"Well, let's get back to what we were talking about," said Tom.

He gave Jack a general idea of the methods he had been using to push the business and the results he had developed so far.

He also outlined his plans for the future.

Jack was an enthusiastic listener.

He easily saw that Tom had been born with an eye to business, and that he was a boy who was not asleep at any stage of the game.

There were certainly great possibilities in Polishine, and if any one could realize on them, that one was Tom Travers.

Here was a chance for him to get on the band wagon, and he was going to accept it.

Blacksmithing was all right in its way, but it wasn't the road to fortune.

So he and Tom came to a complete understanding before the interview was over.

Jack was to sell his smithy and put all his money into Polishine, which, with his services, would entitle him to a third interest in the growing business.

In a day or two Patty retired from the responsibilities that had lately tried her brain and nerves to their limit, and devoted herself to recuperating her energies for the demands of the coming year.

Tom decided that she must take two instead of a month's rest, as he intended to stay around Barmouth until the first of September, when he proposed to go West.

Orders continued to come in for the shoe polish in satisfactory quantity during July and August.

The New York agent was evidently doing his whole duty and earning every cent of his salary, while Tom made frequent trips to Boston to keep the pot a-boiling.

"Things are going all right, Jack, and the business, as far as I've pushed it, is holding its own; but just you see what will happen when I begin stirring things up out West. You'll have to move into larger quarters. From Chicago I'm going to Cincinnati and St. Louis, and many lesser cities. If I'm not wanted back here, it may be six months before I return. After I finish with the West I'm going to

take in Philadelphia, Baltimore and the big places South, but I shall return to Barmouth first. I shall want to see Patty, and how things are going on, of course."

Tom spoke with such confidence and enthusiasm that Jack had not any doubt but that Polishine would take on a real boom just as soon as its inventor took to the road again.

During the last week in August Tom persuaded his mother and Patty to go with him and spend a few days at the quiet little town of Plymouth, on Cape Cod Bay, about forty miles south of Barmouth.

It would be a change for them in a way, though the town possessed none of the advantages of a seaside resort like Barmouth.

The fourth day of their stay was a stormy one, and news was brought to the town that a big bark had gone ashore on a sand bar some miles to the south, in the neighborhood of an unfrequented stretch of shore.

Tom, having nothing to do, decided to tramp down to the vicinity of the wreck.

The clerk at the small hotel where they were stopping directed him to follow a certain road out of Plymouth, which would take him within a mile of the bay.

"It's better for you to go that way than along the shore, for it's more direct," he said. "You can't go wrong if you turn off by the lane close to the Plymouth roadhouse you'll see about seven miles from here. It's the only house for miles on the road, so you couldn't miss it if you tried."

Tom thanked him and started.

It was a bleak afternoon, as we have remarked.

The sky was still piled up with clouds, though the storm was practically over, and the wind from the bay blew keen and cold across the country.

It proved to be a lonesome walk for Tom, but he didn't mind that in the least.

He tramped sturdily onward until he sighted and finally came up with the roadhouse referred to by the hotel clerk.

The lane leading to the bay was close by, and Tom turned into it.

A mile down the lane he came to an apparently deserted building a story and a half high.

Within the last half hour the air had been growing darker and darker, as the clouds from the sea rolled thicker and thicker upon one another.

Tom was satisfied it was going to rain, and so he hailed the house in question with a feeling of satisfaction.

"I guess I'll have to give up my trip to the shore, though I'm almost there. I don't care to risk a bath with my summer flannels on. I'll stop at this shelter and rest a while. Maybe the weather will brighten by and by."

Tom entered the building and looked around.

An old-fashioned wide, open fireplace stood at the back of the single room that composed the lower floor, and there was the remains of a recent fire on the hearth.

There were also a rough deal table and three stools in the room, while on the table stood a black bottle with a piece of candle stuck into the neck.

There were liquor stains, fragments of food and fine pieces of smoking tobacco strewn about on the table, showing that some one had tarried there recently.

The floor was full of cracks and holes, and was covered with the dirt of many months.

Tom tried one of the closed doors he saw and found it opened on an empty, roomy cupboard.

A ladder which stood in one corner communicated through an open trap with a loft above.

Tom crept up to see what the place was like.

There were two piles of dry hay there that looked as if they had been used as beds by a pair of homeless wanderers.

Between the beds lay a couple of bundles, which seemed to indicate that the men who had slept on the straw intended to return for a night's lodging, at least.

Tom was on the point of retracing his steps to the floor below, when he heard voices outside the building, and presently two rough-looking individuals entered the house.

"Blast the weather!" growled one of them. "It's comin' on to rain again."

"Dash my vig!" answered the other, with a strong cockney accent, "if hit ain't gettin' blacker nor the hace of spades."

The two men took their seats at the table, and the thick-set man struck a match and lighted the candle in the bottle.

Tom, peering down through the trap, had a good view of both of them.

The one with the London accent was short and thin, wore a soft cap, and had his threadbare jacket buttoned close around his body.

He looked like famine's youngest son, so drawn and cadaverous were his features.

Tom gave him but a casual glance, for the other man arrested his attention.

There was something strangely familiar about him to the boy.

As he approached his face to the candle to light a pipe he had filled his features were thrown for a moment into bold relief.

Then it was that Tom recognized him as Bud Smith, one of the Night Hawks, who had escaped from the State prison.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF THE WRECK.

"Well, Jimmy, things look kind of queer with us," remarked Bud Smith, with a scowl.

"Queer! They couldn't look queerer," answered his companion, whose name was Jimmy Gubbins, disconsolately.

The speaker was a London sneak thief, with a record at the Scotland Yard detective bureau, and he had come to America because he couldn't keep out of jail at home.

"We haven't a nickel between us," growled Smith.

"Never a red," replied Gubbins. "And we hain't 'ad nothin' to heat all day."

"I should like to raise the wind somehow," said Smith.

"Should you?" returned the cockney crook. "Vell, then, I'm precious glad you can't—the vind is too 'igh already for the ruined state of my wardrobe. I'm bless'd if the vind don't blow in at this 'ere 'ole at the top of my cap, and comes hout at this 'ere 'ole at the bottom of my shoe."

"Don't be so funny. You know what I mean. We've got to have money, or we don't eat."

"Oh, Lor'! Don't mention heatin'. I'm that 'ungry I could heat a 'orse, tail and hall."

"Neither do we drink anythin' stronger than water unless we can find the price. My throat is as dry as a chip."

"And mine is as dry as a salt 'errin'."

"I've never known it to be otherwise, Jimmy, since we come together," said Smith, with a sardonic grin.

"I can't 'elp it. It's my mother's fault—she weaned me on salt fish."

"She did, eh?" chuckled Smith. "It's a wonder you didn't become a sailor, then, instead of a sleight-of-hand artist."

"Sleight-of-'and artist! Is that wot you call perfessional gents like me in this country? Never 'eard the name before."

"It fits you, don't it?"

"It ain't 'arf bad. You wouldn't believe, maybe, but my grandmother wanted to make a hangel of me. She used to say that the 'appenny a week she allowed me for hextras was better'n a sovereign a day not come honestly by. But she was a hignorant old cretur. Many a time she'd say to me, 'He who prigs vot isn't his'n, 'e vill surely go to prison.' But 'e von't if 'e hain't caught at it."

"You've been pinched often enough to know how it feels."

"Vell, powder me blue if I hain't seen the insides of hevery jug within a 'undred mile of Lunnan. The beaks knew me so well I couldn't walk 'arf a block but von of them 'ad 'is heye on me."

"So you shook the old country and came to America."

"I 'ad to. It got too 'ot for me hover there."

"You won't find it any cooler over here unless you stand in with the cops."

The foregoing conversation was not very interesting to Tom Travers, as he looked down from the loft at the pair of rascals at the table.

He wondered how long they intended to stay there.

He didn't relish the nearness of their society, and he entertained serious doubts as to how they would act if he made an attempt to leave the premises while they were in the building.

At length Bud Smith knocked the dead ashes from his pipe, blew out the candle, got up and moved toward the door.

"Come on, Jimmy," he said. "I'm goin' up to the road-house to beg a meal. I can't stand this gnawin' at my vitals. I'd about as soon be in jail."

"Dash my vig, but I'm with you," cried the English crook, jumping to his feet and following his companion outside.

"Thank goodness, they're gone!" breathed Tom, slipping down the ladder. "I'd rather take a good soaking than have a run-in with those chaps in this lonesome place."

He went to the door to watch their retreat, but was rather staggered to see them standing just outside, looking in the direction of the bay.

Wondering what they were looking at, he turned his gaze in that direction, too.

A bearded, square-built man, dressed in a pea jacket and a cap that clearly indicated that his business was connected with the sea, was coming up the lane.

He walked a bit unsteadily, like a man who might have taken a drop too much.

The two crooks seemed to watch his approach with much interest—Tom with a certain amount of apprehension for his safety, for he easily believed that the two rascals were desperate enough to attack the stranger on the chance of finding money in his pockets.

"Hello, messmate," said Smith, when the newcomer got quite close to them. "Where bound?"

"I'm bound for a town called Plymouth," replied the stranger. "Perhaps you can tell me if I'm likely to fetch it on this tack."

"Plymouth is eight miles away," replied Smith; "but, as me and my pal is goin' there, we'll see to it you don't miss your way."

"Well, that's kind of you. I haven't been in these parts for ten years, and the country looks kind of strange to me, though I don't believe it's changed any. You see, the bark Shenandoah, in which I shipped at Buenos Ayres for Boston, got caught in a fog last night somewhere off Boston Light. We lost our reckoning, drifted about all night, and this morning went ashore on a sand bar yonder," and the speaker waved his hand toward the bay. "I was the only one saved, for the sea pounded the vessel so hard that she broke up. I floated ashore on a spar and was hauled out of the surf by the life-saving crew of the station below here. They pulled me around after a time, and I made up my mind to walk to Plymouth, where I was told I could catch a train for Boston. I'm afraid, though, that the last glass of hot whiskey I drank has kind of muddled my brains, which ain't very strong since I came out of the hospital at Buenos Ayres."

"Don't you worry about that, messmate," replied Smith. "We'll see you right on your road with a great deal of pleasure."

"I'm obliged to you for your kindness, my friend. I hope you'll allow me to make it all right with you. I always like to pay for any favor that's rendered me, especially as in this case you both look as if you'd seen hard luck."

"We don't want to rob you, messmate," replied Smith, in a friendly way. "You've been shipwrecked, you know, and can't have much about you."

"That's where you make a mistake, my friends. I've

more than a thousand dollars in a belt around my waist. I saved that, you see, if I was shipwrecked."

"Oh, blessed saint of the mint! Did you hear that?" Tom heard Jimmy Gubbins say in a low tone to his companion. "A thousand dollars! Oh, crickey!"

"Poor man! They will rob, perhaps murder him," breathed the boy, with the greatest anxiety. "How can I put him on his guard?"

At that moment it began to rain, and the drops came down big and fast.

"It's rainin'. Looks as if it would come down hard in a few minutes. We'll just take shelter in this old house, messmate, till it lets up," said Smith, catching the stranger by the arm and leading him toward the door; "then we'll start for Plymouth."

"All right, my friend," said the mariner, heartily. "I'm not aching for another wetting, although I dare say it wouldn't hurt me, seeing as I'm used to it."

"I mustn't be seen," said Tom to himself. "I'll get up to the loft again."

He found, however, that he had no time to retreat above if he hoped to escape observation, so he made a quick dive for the shelter of the cupboard and pulled the door to after him.

"I must save this stranger somehow," thought Tom, as he watched the two crooks and their prospective victim enter the room. "He's evidently the mate of the bark lost on the sand bar. It is my duty to do by him as I should have wished another to do by my father if, during his lifetime, he had been placed in a like situation."

"How do you like our humble shed, messmate?" asked Bud Smith, after he had relighted the candle and pointed at one of the stools—a mute invitation that the stranger accepted. "Unfortunate circumstances have compelled my pal and myself to live here for a week past."

"I thought you'd seen hard luck, my friend," replied the mariner, in a tone of hearty sympathy. "I suppose a five-dollar note divided between you two would be welcome? You look as if you were hungry."

"'Ungry!" chipped in Gubbins, placing one hand on his stomach. "We hain't 'ad nothin' to eat worth mentionin' for a month."

"That's too bad. Is times so hard in this country now that you can't get work?"

"They couldn't well be 'arder," replied Jimmy, dolefully.

"Is that a fact? I suppose neither of you'll object to my standing treat to a first-rate meal when we reach Plymouth? It isn't in my nature to see any man go hungry while I've got a shot in the locker—that is, a dollar in my pocket."

"It's some distance to Plymouth, messmate. If you don't mind, we'd consider it a favor if you'd loan us the price of a couple of snacks of bread and cheese and a quart of beer. Perhaps you'd prefer whiskey for yourself?" said Smith.

"Loan you! Why, I'll give it to you, man," replied the mariner, breezily. "But where are you going to get it

around here? I haven't seen a house in sight, except this old shack, since I left the beach."

"There's a public 'ouse at the 'ead of the lane," said Gubbins, with alacrity. "I'll fetch the things from there."

"What's the use of taking all that trouble? We'll all three go there and get a meal shipshape," said the stranger, rising.

"We can't go there now," objected Smith. "It's rainin' hard."

"Then how do you expect to get the bread and cheese and beer?" asked the mariner, sitting down again.

"Oh, I don't mind a vettin'," replied Gubbins. "It von't be the first von I've 'ad. Why, vonce I vos ducked six times in an 'orse pond for bonin' a child's——"

Smith cut his reminiscent remark short with a punch in the stomach.

"Oh, crickey! Wot did you do that for?"

"It was an accident," replied Smith, with a scowl.

"Vell, don't do it again. You nearly made a 'hole through my innards."

"If you don't mind givin' my pal half a dollar, with a trifle extra for a small pocket flask of whiskey for yourself, why, I'll be much obliged to you," said Smith to the mariner.

"I haven't got less than a five-dollar bill," replied the man, unbuckling his belt, opening a water-tight compartment in it, and removing a wad of money.

The two crooks gazed with longing eyes at the roll of bills as the stranger peeled off a five-dollar one and tossed it on the table.

"There you are," he said in a friendly way. "Use what you want of it."

"Won't I?" muttered Gubbins, making a grab at the bill as the mariner replaced the money belt around his waist.

He dashed up the ladder and presently returned with a thick gunnysack, which he drew over his head and shoulders.

"This vill do for a humberella," he grinned. "If the vater comes in at the top of my shoes it'll run hout again through the 'oles at the bottom."

With this parting remark he ran out of the doorway into the gloom of the dreary afternoon.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE EVE OF A CRIME.

"I suppose you've been all over the world, shipmate?" remarked Smith, when the English sneak thief had departed on his errand.

"Pretty near," replied the mariner.

"How long have you been at sea?"

"Ever since I was a boy."

"That's a long time. Bound home now, eh?"

"Home!" exclaimed the stranger, with a start. "I hope so."

"You hope so? Aren't you sure?"

The mariner shook his head sadly.

"You can't be sure of anything in this world. It's ten years since I was home last."

"Ten years! Where have you been all that time?"

"Shipwrecked."

"Shipwrecked, eh?"

"Every soul lost but me—just like it was with the brig this morning. Seems singular, doesn't it, that I was the only one to live through both disasters?"

Bud Smith nodded, and sucked at his pipe, which he had refilled and lighted.

"Where was you shipwrecked?"

"On a small island off the coast of South America."

"Just where my father was lost," thought Tom Travers, who was listening intently.

"And did that happen ten years ago?" asked Smith.

"It did," replied the stranger, solemnly.

"Gracious!" breathed Tom. "His vessel was lost about the same time as my father's, too."

"How long were you on the island?" asked Smith.

"Nearly ten years."

"Not all alone?"

"Yes, all alone," replied the mariner, with a nod.

"Didn't a vessel come near the island in all that time?"

"Not a single vessel put in there all that time. Many came near enough for me to signal them after a fashion, but they never paid any attention."

"That was hard luck, shipmate."

"I thought so until one day a brig put in and took me off. She left me at Buenos Ayres, where I was at once taken down with brain fever and sent to the hospital. When I recovered I was not quite the same man I had been, at least about the head. I shipped for Boston as chief mate of the bark Shenandoah, although I had been a capt'n for a matter of ten years. But my ill luck attended me still, for she was driven out of her course when within sight of port and lost on the sand bar yonder, as I told you before."

"Well, shipmate, I reckon your hard luck is over now. You'll soon be home," said Smith, with a wolfish chuckle.

"Ay, ay, if I can find a home to go to," replied the mariner, sadly.

"Why shouldn't you find it? You ain't forgot where it was, have you?"

"No; but many changes happen in ten years."

"That's right, they do."

"I have doubtless long since been given up for dead."

"Very likely."

"My wife and little ones"—his voice broke and he wiped a tear away—"may be dead, or have moved somewhere else."

"They wouldn't stay in one place ten years," nodded Smith.

"And so you see how I'm fixed. I'll probably have to look them up before I can hope to meet them again. But

if they're alive I'll find them, never fear—oh, yes, I'll find them."

At that moment Jimmy Gubbins came back with several packages in his arms, a big tin pail in his hand, a bottle of whiskey in one pocket and three glasses in the other.

He laid everything out on the table and took the center stool himself.

"You'll join us in a glass first, won't you, shipmate?" said Smith, proceeding to fill the glasses. "There's nothin' like sociability, you know, to promote good friendship."

"Very well," consented the stranger, genially.

"'Ere's to your verry good 'ealth, Mister Sailor," said Gubbins, grabbing his glass. "May we meet more numerous, but never less respectable."

The glasses were quickly drained, and those of Smith and his pal refilled.

"Now, shipmate, help yourself to the whiskey. Where's the gentleman's change, Jimmy?"

"Vell, blow me tight if I didn't forget hall about it," said the sneak thief, slowly taking some silver from his pocket with one hand, while he ravenously devoured a chunk of bread and cheese held in the other. "Wot was it that you give me—a two-dollar bill, wasn't it?"

"No, Jimmy, it was a five-plunk note," said Smith. "You have a very bad memory."

"So my grandmother used to say when I boned her purse vunce or twice and forgot to return it," replied the London thief, grudgingly counting out the money. "There's your change. Two pints of beer at ten cents is a quarter. One bottle of whiskey at \$1.50—that's two dollars. Eight sandwiches at ten cents each is another dollar. And the loan of three glasses is another quarter. That makes \$3.50 altogether. That's correct, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is," replied the stranger, pocketing the change in an abstracted way.

"Of course it is," asserted Gubbins, winking at Smith. "There's one thing I can say for myself, and that is I'm strictly honest. My grandmother walloped it into me and I hain't forgot it. She used to say to me that honesty vos the best policeman—we call 'em beaks on the other side—in the world. If you're honest you won't never get into the jug. Unfort'nitly lots of honest folks gets into the work-house."

"You ain't drinkin', shipmate," said Smith. "Come, now, fill up. A drop of whiskey 'll warm your blood. This kind of weather is enough to chill one to the bone."

He filled the stranger's glass half full of the spirits.

"Your health, shipmate."

The mariner mechanically drank when the others drained their glasses.

There was silence in the room for some minutes, while the crooks worked their jaws over the sandwiches, that disappeared down their throats with surprising rapidity.

Tom Travers all this time watched what was going on under his eye with a beating heart.

He felt it was but a preliminary to a contemplated crime.

Bud Smith was trying to lull the stranger into a sense of complete security.

Had the mariner noticed Jimmy Gubbins's errors of computation in accounting for the unexpended balance of the five-dollar bill, he would have suspected him and compelled his comrade to disgorge the difference.

While he was stowing away his share of the sandwiches Smith was thinking how he could get possession of the stranger's valuable belt with the least trouble.

He was prepared to murder the chief mate of the lost bark, if necessary, to get the thousand dollars, while Gubbins had no objection to help him do it for half of the swag.

Smith, however, had not the slightest intention of letting his companion have more than a tenth part of the money, nor even that much, for he proposed to shake him as soon as possible after the contemplated crime.

Outside it was raining steadily, with little prospect of a let up for some time to come.

"I guess the rain is good for another hour," remarked Smith, at last. "You look fagged out, shipmate."

"I feel so," replied the stranger, a bit wearily.

"Then you'd better go up into the loft and lie down for a while. We'll wake you when the weather clears."

"There's a lot of straw hup there," put in Gubbins. "You'll sleep as sound as a toft in a feather bed, blow me tight if you won't."

"I think I'd feel better if I lay down for a spell," replied the chief mate. "I suppose it's quite a walk from here to Plymouth?"

"It's all of eight mile," answered Smith. "Take another drink, shipmate. It'll steady your nerves."

"No, no; I'll drink no more. My head won't stand it."

"Well, please yourself. You're the doctor. Shall I help you up the ladder?"

"No. I'm a sailor, you know."

"All right, shipmate. Make yourself at home up there."

The stranger took off his peajacket, threw it on the stool and started for the ladder.

Tom saw him slowly mount to the loft and disappear through the trap in the ceiling; then he watched the crooks to see what they were going to do next.

"It's werry aggravatin' that he didn't leave 'is money in 'is jacket, for then we'd 'ave no trouble 'ookin' it, and we could be miles away when he voke hup."

"It doesn't make any difference, we'll get it, anyway, just as soon as he's sound asleep. I'll slip up and take the belt off him. It's a fine thing for us that he's his own banker."

"Nothin' like bein' your hown banker," grinned the sneak thief. "I mean to hopen a bank some day myself."

"What with? A crowbar?" chuckled Smith, sardonically.

"Did 'e put that change in 'is pocket, or in 'is jacket?" asked Gubbins, taking up the garment and running his nimble fingers through each pocket with professional celerity. "Not a bloomin' copper!" throwing it upon the table in disgust.

"That's a good jacket," said Smith, picking it up and looking it over. "I'm goin' to keep it. Hello! Here's his name stitched in it."

"'Is name?"

"Yes—Ezra Travers."

"My father!" gasped Tom, aloud, his heart almost ceasing to beat.

CHAPTER XV.

BACK TO LIFE.

"What did you say?" said Smith, turning to his pal.

"I didn't say hanythin'," replied Gubbins.

"Yes, you did. You said somethin' about your father."

"'Ow could I? Why, I never 'ad von. It must 'ave been the sailor chap talkin' in his sleep."

"If he's asleep we'd better be thinkin' of gettin' down to business," said Smith, taking a revolver out of his hip pocket."

"You hain't goin' to shoot 'im, are you?" asked Gubbins. "It isn't rainin' so 'ard now. Somebody might be comin' this way, an 'e'd 'ear the report. Better stick 'im with this 'ere knife, if you've got to settle 'im," and the London crook took out of his pocket a sheath, from which he pulled a six-inch blade.

"I don't know but you're right, Jimmy. Give me the knife. I can cut the belt off with it and he'll be none the wiser. I'd rather get it without killin' him if I can."

Gubbins handed his pal the knife, and Smith, leaving his revolver on the table, started for the ladder.

The British crook followed him to the corner of the room, probably with the intention of sneaking up after him and watching the execution of the job.

Tom Travers, who had been standing in a dazed state since he had heard the mention of his father's name, now woke up to the urgency of the situation.

Whether this stranger really was his long-lost father or not, he was determined to save him even at the risk of his own life.

It was not surprising that he had not recognized the mariner, if the man was his father, for he was only seven and a half years old when his parent left Boston on his ill-fated voyage, and he had only an indistinct recollection of what his father looked like at the time.

Then the changes that take place in a person in ten years would have to be considered also.

All these points had flitted through the boy's mind as he strove to believe that the man who had gone into the loft to sleep was really his dear father actually come back to life.

Tom opened the closet door wide and stood for a moment undecided how to act.

Smith was already halfway up the ladder, with the knife in his teeth.



(Continued on page 26.)

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Out To-Day   **Out To-Day**

(Continued from page 24.)

Then it was that Tom saw the revolver lying on the table. With a cry of satisfaction he jumped out and secured it. Cocking it, he pointed it at Smith and cried: "Stop! Another step up that ladder and I'll put a ball through you."

Gubbins turned around and gave a gasp.

The two crooks were fairly taken by surprise.

In order to wake up the man he supposed might be his father, as well as to impress the rascals with the fact that he meant business, Tom pulled the trigger and sent a ball whizzing close by Smith's ear.

With a smothered imprecation the crook slid to the floor, and, grabbing the knife out of his mouth, stood as if undecided whether or not to make a sudden rush at the boy, who seemed to be master of the situation.

The report of the revolver awakened the stranger, and he stuck his head down through the opening.

The tableau he saw below rather astonished him.

"Hello! What's the matter?" he asked in a bluff tone.

"The matter is that these fellows intended to rob you of the money you have in a belt around your waist," replied Tom.

"Rob me!" exclaimed the chief mate.

"It's a lie!" snarled Smith.

"Vell, powder me blue if I hever 'eard the like of that! Ve wouldn't rob nobody of nothin' whotsomdever," asserted Jimmy Gubbins.

"That man with the knife in his hand is Bud Smith, an escaped convict from the State penitentiary," said Tom.

With a snarl like a wild beast's, Smith made a sudden dash at the boy; but Tom was not off his guard in the least.

He jumped behind the table and fired at the arm that held the knife.

With a roar of pain, Smith staggered back, the weapon dropping to the floor.

Jimmy Gubbins, panic-stricken, dashed out of the back door and sped across the meadows as fast as he could go.

With the flash and report of the second shot from the revolver the stranger put his foot on the upper round of the ladder and was presently standing on the floor of the room.

"Who are you, my lad?" he asked in a tone of puzzled wonderment. "I don't quite understand this matter. You say this man is an escaped convict, and that he and his companion meant to rob me?"

"I did say so, and it's a fact. He got away from the penitentiary with a companion about three months ago. You asked me my name—well, it's Tom Travers."

"Tom Travers!" exclaimed the mariner, slowly. "Tom Travers!" he repeated, an indescribable look coming into his eyes. "It cannot be that you are—who was your father, boy?" he asked, taking a step forward in his feverish eagerness.

"My father," replied Tom, in a trembling tone, "was Captain Ezra Travers, of the brig Susan De—"

"My son!" cried the stranger, rushing forward with outstretched arms. "My boy Tom. I am your father."

"Father, is it indeed you, come back to life?"

In a moment father and son were locked in each other's arms.

The discomfited convict stared at the tableau in amazement.

Then, as if he perceived the advantage in it for himself, he stole toward the door, holding his wounded arm to support it, and in another moment was gone.

Tom and his father saw him disappear.

"My dear, dear boy, how you have grown!" exclaimed Ezra Travers, drawing back and contemplating his son with eyes that beamed a newly born happiness. "I never should have known you. And your mother," he added eagerly, "is she well? And little Dora. Where are they? Are you living in this neighborhood now?"

"Mother is quite well, and so is Dora. But as we long ago received news of the loss of the Susan Dean, and never heard tidings from you or any of the brig's company, we naturally came to look upon you as dead."

"Dead!" said Captain Travers. "Yes, I have been dead to the world for ten long years. But, thank heaven, I have at last returned to life and my dear ones again."

"I will have to break the news to mother before you can meet her, father."

"Yes, yes. I will go with you at once."

"We live at Barmouth, a few miles south of Boston."

"Barmouth! I know the place. How happens it you are down in this neighborhood, then?"

"I brought mother down to Plymouth for a few days' change of scene. We have rooms at the hotel there."

"Plymouth! That is but a few miles from here," said the captain, eagerly. "Let us start at once. I am nearly wild to clasp your mother in my arms again."

"I am ready, father," replied Tom. "It has stopped raining, I think. It will be dark long before we can reach town. I see both of those rascals have got away. Well, it doesn't matter—they will be captured sooner or later, that's pretty certain. Come, father."

As Tom spoke, the candle in the neck of the bottle on the table gave one last expiring gasp and went out, leaving them in darkness.

The father and son, so strangely reunited, left the miserable and deserted shanty arm in arm, and turned their faces up the lane toward the road that led to Plymouth.

CHAPTER XVI.

HARNESSINE.

"Mother," cried Tom, rushing into the room occupied by his mother and Patty at the small inn at Plymouth two hours later, "I have wonderful news to tell you."

"Indeed, my son? What is it?"

"Do you think you can stand a sudden shock, mother?"

"A shock, Tom?" asked Mrs. Travers, apprehensively.

"What do you mean? Surely nothing has happened to your sister?"

"No, mother. This shock is one of joy—a great joy. Can you stand it? Suppose you heard that father was alive?"

"Alive!"

Mrs. Travers clasped her hands over her heart, while her face went quite white.

"Your father—alive!" she whispered in a strange, tense tone. "Tom, is this true? Is it really a fact that he is not dead, after all?"

"It is really true, mother. He is both alive and well, and not far away."

The little woman, who had for so many years regarded herself as a widow, trembled violently as the news forced itself through her brain.

Then she would have fallen had not Tom sprung forward and caught her in his strong arms.

"Father!" he cried loudly, and as if the word had been a preconcerted signal between them, the bearded mariner rushed into the room and in another moment had his half-fainting wife in his arms.

"Come, Patty," said Tom to the amazed girl, who had been a spectator of the unexpected scene, "let's go outside for a little while."

Tom and Patty went downstairs to the office, where the boy sent a dispatch to Jack Harding, telling him that Captain Travers had turned up in a remarkable manner, and requesting him to break the happy news to Dora.

That night the husband and father learned all the particulars of what had transpired since he left Boston in the Susan Dean, on the voyage destined to be her last.

Tom also told him about his polishing business, and what he expected to accomplish with it.

The reader may well believe that there wasn't a happier little family party from Maine to California than that gathered in the Travers's room at the Plymouth Inn that night.

The first thing Tom did in the morning was to notify the Plymouth constable about the presence of Bud Smith, escaped convict, and his companion, Jimmy Gubbins, in that locality.

A posse was organized to catch them, but nothing came of it.

Tom cut their stay at Plymouth short by a day, as his father was extremely anxious to see Dora, and so next morning they took the first train back to Barmouth.

Our hero telegraphed word of their coming ahead, and thus it happened that Jack and Dora were at the station to meet them when they stepped out of the cars.

Next day the Barmouth Courant printed the story of Captain Ezra Travers's ten years' sojourn on the little island off the coast of South America, and the story reappeared in the prominent Boston dailies, as well as in many other newspapers throughout the country.

Tom deferred his trip West for a week in order to longer

enjoy the society of the father from whom he had been so long separated.

Captain Travers decided that he had had enough of the sea for the rest of his life, and expressed his intention of settling down at the cottage his wife had purchased with his savings.

It was the habit he had practised from boyhood of carrying his money strapped around his waist in a waterproof belt that enabled him to save the \$1,000 odd when the Susan Dean went ashore, a total loss, on the South Atlantic island.

When Tom reached Chicago with his supply of samples he started to boom his "Polishine" on a somewhat similar scale as he had followed in New York.

He canvassed the leading wholesale grocers, and the better class of retail shoe stores.

In several of the latter, and in department stores, he introduced demonstrators to show the public what the polish could accomplish.

He also succeeded in interesting the heads of two great novelty houses—the biggest in the country—in his magic polish, and made big contracts with them to furnish a special sized bottle of the stuff for their exclusive trade.

He spent a month in the Windy City, and before he left established an agency in a prominent street to keep the ball rolling in that locality.

The result of his Chicago hustling was a rush of orders that compelled Jack Harding to move the manufacturing department to roomier quarters, as well as to enlarge the working force.

Tom spent two weeks in Cincinnati and three weeks in St. Louis, establishing a branch office in each city, with a wide-awake young man in charge of it.

Kansas City and a dozen other cities of the Middle West were visited, and the Polishine forced upon the attention of the merchants and general public with great success.

Tom returned to Barmouth the day before Christmas.

He found the business going on in accordance with the tenor of Patty's letters.

Jack had his hands full keeping up with the orders that were now coming in every day for the magic compound that was taking like wildfire everywhere it became known to the public.

His New York agent had succeeded, after many attempts, in catching a big Broadway novelty house on a large contract.

The manager of this company had turned Tom himself down three times while he was in New York, and the young man had left the capture of the house to his hustling agent to accomplish, with instructions to keep at them till he got a contract.

The first order was for 200 dozen bottles, special size and label, and necessitated another increase of the working force in the Barmouth factory.

Altogether, the outlook for the magic polish was very encouraging.

Tom, during Christmas week, discovered that he had another string to his bow.

He experimented with Polishine on harness leather, and found that it was equally as effective as on shoe leather.

He decided, therefore, to put up a special brand for the harness trade, which hereafter he would make a side issue with Polishine proper.

It was practically the same article, but Tom's object was to make it appear to be a special compound for harness makers' use only.

He gave it altogether a different tint, without changing its quality at all, and he ordered a special shaped bottle from the glassworks to contain it.

He began to introduce it by inserting advertisements in the leading harness makers' trade papers throughout the country.

The secret of changing the magic shoe polish into the magic harness polish was intrusted to Captain Ezra Traversers to carry out in a special room of the factory.

Cans of Polishine went in one door and came out bottled Harnessine at another, the only real difference between the two being the color and smell.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

New Years Day dawned cold and cloudy.

People when they looked out of doors that morning said it would probably snow before night.

Tom, who expected to start on his southwestern trip in a few days, decided to take advantage of the time-honored custom of making calls on that day, somewhat out of vogue in Barmouth, as well as elsewhere, to visit his numerous circle of friends, who had seen very little of him since the preceding summer.

He was welcomed with open arms, and made a great deal of.

His popularity with the girls would have been greater but for the fact that it was generally known in town that he was engaged to be married to Patty Penrose—whose luck in catching him all the young ladies of Barmouth envied.

Everybody wanted to know if Tom was making a fortune out of Polishine, the general impression being that he was, because of the increasing amount of business people noted about the polish factory.

It was snowing quite hard when Tom tore himself away from the house where he made his last call.

It was close on to midnight, and he started off briskly toward his home a mile away.

The air was thick with heavy flakes of snow, which, as there was little wind, fell straight down and lay in an ever-increasing mass upon housetop, field, and roadway.

Tom had to pass Nathan Kemp's dwelling.

The secretary of the Boston Missionary Society had never forgiven Tom for the part he played in helping Patty Penrose to cut loose from his family roof-tree.

He had had several girls since in Patty's place, but none stayed very long, as they couldn't get on at all with Miss Priscilla, whose domineering ways they resented.

They couldn't find a second Patty, and Mr. Kemp and his sister laid the blame of their loss upon Tom's broad shoulders.

The girl's prosperity since leaving them was also a thorn in their sides.

Had she been obliged to work as a common factory girl in one of the nearby towns it would have been something of a satisfaction to them.

Instead of which she was high up the ladder of successful employment, and it was known that she was actually a partner in the "Polishine" business.

Nathan Kemp's property had a frontage of a hundred feet on the road, with a thick hedge on either side of the house.

As Tom neared this hedge he heard voices on the other side of it.

The boy stopped and listened to see if one of the speakers was Nathan Kemp.

The first words that struck upon his ear were spoken in the familiar cockney accents of the London sneak thief with whom he had come into contact last August in the deserted shack down the line in Plymouth township.

"Vell, dash my vig, if 'ere hain't a go," Jimmy Gubbins was saying, in a tone of disgust. "So you've been and gone and lost the bloomin' jimmy ve vor dependin' on to bust the door in vith. Vot are ve goin' to do now?"

"It can't be helped," growled the voice of Bud Smith. "I dare say we can cut away the wood around the lock with that knife of yours, and get in that way."

"But 'ow habout the bolts? If I vos doin' the job alone, I'd vork at a vinder. They hain't so 'ard as doors to hopen if you work 'em right."

"Well, we'll tackle a winder, then," consented Smith.

"I 'ope you hain't made no mistake habout 'is havin' money in the 'ouse, 'cause ve need it wuss than anythink I know of."

"He's got a wad all right. I saw him countin' it in the train from Boston last night, and he couldn't have banked it to-day to save his life."

"Maybe 'e 'as a strong box in 'is bedroom."

"If it isn't too big and heavy we'll carry it away and break it open up at the blacksmith shop."

"I vonder if 'e's a light sleeper? If 'e should vake up——"

"We'll have to silence him," answered Smith, grimly.

"Ve might do that vithout killin' 'im. Ve could stuff a rag in 'is mouth."

"What's the matter with you? Gettin' a weak backbone all of a sudden?" said Smith, sarcastically.

"Vell, you see as 'ow my grandmother——"

"Oh, hang your grandmother!" growled Smith, impatiently.

"Ow could I 'ang her vhen she's been dead these twenty year back?"

"Shut up your trap, and let's get about the business."

Tom didn't hear any more, and concluded that the rascals had gone toward the house to begin operations.

"So," he muttered, "they're going to try and rob Nathan Kemp. I'll have to interfere with their little project, although the old fellow is down on me like a thousand of bricks."

Tom pushed the hedge aside and saw the two crooks just disappearing around the corner of the one-story kitchen annex.

"It will take them a little while to get into the building," thought the boy. "I'll have time enough to run over to Constable Spriggin's house and rout him out of bed and into his clothes. Then we'll come back and do these chaps up."

It didn't take Tom but a few minutes to reach the constable's domicile.

He pounded loudly on the door, and presently Mr. Spriggin came downstairs in a suit of tropical-looking pajamas.

He let Tom in, and rather testily inquired his business at that late hour of the night.

Tom told him in a few words of the burglary that was on the tapis, and that woke the constable up to a sense of his duty.

Five minutes later he and Tom, each armed with a revolver, left his house en route for the Kemp home.

They cautiously approached the rear of the premises and found that the kitchen window had been forced.

Tom Travers looked at the window a moment and then went and tried the door.

It was unfastened.

Evidently the slight and agile London thief had got through the window and then unfastened the door to allow his companion, who was a thickset fellow, to enter.

Tom and the constable made their way softly upstairs to the second floor.

Here they found one of the doors ajar.

They pushed it open and entered the room.

A lamp was burning on the table.

It was Nathan Kemp's practice to sleep with a light turned low in his room.

Bud Smith had turned the wick up the better to see what they could find.

Both the rascals were in the room, with their backs to the door—Smith in the act of prying open a bureau drawer, while Gubbins was holding down the gagged figure of Nathan Kemp in the bed.

"Surrender, you rascals!" roared the constable, covering Smith with his weapon.

"Blessed saint of the mint!" gasped Gubbins, releasing his victim, "we're scragged!"

"Help! help!" screamed Nathan Kemp, after tearing the cloth from his mouth.

Bud Smith sullenly yielded to the force of circumstances, and Jimmy Gubbins followed suit when he saw that the game was up.

They were being handcuffed when Miss Priscilla ran into the room in rather light apparel.

She screamed and fled, when she saw that the room was full of men, as it seemed to her.

Nathan Kemp glared at Tom Travers as if he suspected him of unlawful intentions, and was surprised to learn that it was all owing to Tom that he was saved from being robbed.

He expressed no gratitude, however.

Tom helped march the crooks to the lockup.

Next day they were brought before the magistrate and examined.

In the end, Smith was returned to the State Prison to finish his sentence, with a new indictment hanging over his head, on which he would be arrested and brought to trial as soon as he had served his term as a Night Hawk.

Jimmy Gubbins was tried, convicted, and sent to keep him company for a number of years.

After the trial Nathan Kemp thanked Tom in a grudging manner for what he had done in his behalf, but they never became friendly.

Tom made a successful tour to Philadelphia and the South in the interests of "Polishine," and subsequently went West to conquer new fields of enterprise.

Two years elapsed, and then a three-story brick factory was erected by the Polishine Company, which was now doing a land office business.

On Tom's twenty-first birthday he and Patty were married, but the young wife continued to act as Secretary and Treasurer of the company.

Jack Harding and Dora had been wedded two years before that happy event.

Tom is now quite a man, but he has the same wonderful eye for business as he had as a boy, who was not asleep at any stage of the game.

THE END.

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